

# Palestine Refugees Today

No. 84





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Cover photo: Volleyball player at summer camp for refugee girls in Gaza, 1977.

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## Again, together

Almost two years after leaving Lebanon because of civil strife, UNRWA Headquarters in November began moving back to Beirut from Amman, Jordan and Vienna, Austria where the Headquarters had been temporarily established.

UNRWA's Headquarters' staff members are now reunited in their former offices, shared by UNRWA's Lebanon Field Office, and in a new nine-storey building nearby in Beirut.

The decision to return to Beirut when new office accommodation was ready was taken by UNRWA Commissioner-General, Thomas W. McElhiney, following the authority given by the United Nations Secretary-General earlier in the year for UN agencies to bring back their staffs to Beirut.

Beginning in mid-November, tons of office furniture, files and equipment -- from the messenger's motorcycle to the darkroom sink -- were packed into crates and freighted by truck or airplane to Beirut.

In the interim, the Agency had recruited some new employees; other staff members had retired and will be missed; families have changed in size due to births, marriages and deaths.

The orderliness of the return was in pleasant contrast to the uncertainties surrounding the departure of Headquarters two years earlier. This time, the travel route back to Beirut was direct for everyone and staff members had the feeling of "going home."

The relocation to Amman and Vienna in January 1976 had been an emergency measure to restore Headquarters' support and control of programmes on behalf of 1.7 million registered refugees in five UNRWA Fields of operation -- East Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, and the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. The work of Headquarters had been virtually brought to a halt at times during 1975 and continuously from 6 December 1975 as the disturbances made it increasingly difficult for most staff to reach the offices. During the civil strife, UNRWA's Lebanon Field Office had maintained operations, not without difficulty, to meet the pressing needs of the 201,000 Palestine refugees registered with the Agency in Lebanon. Services, however, were not back to normal until January 1977, while additional welfare assistance on an emergency basis continued to be provided in the form of clothing, blankets and supplementary food for the approximately 30,000 Palestine refugees displaced during the conflict.

Many of these displaced refugees came from two camps in the Beirut area: Dekwaneh (Part of the Tell Zaatar quarter) and Jisr el Basha, both of which were totally destroyed.

A new camp is to be set up in southern Lebanon at Bayssarieh, initially to shelter 8,500 of the displaced refugees. The first phase of the construction of this new camp will cost about \$6 million, of which the Government of Lebanon has already provided \$3.3 million.

# Action for community health

In the crisp autumn air about 100 boys were running down the narrow lanes of Arrub refugee camp with plastic sacks filled with litter, following an UNRWA sanitation labourer with laden wheelbarrow on his way to the camp incinerator. The boys, all second- and third-year preparatory students from the nearby UNRWA/Unesco school, were participants in a two-part camp clean-up campaign organized by health education worker Hussein Othman.

This part of the campaign dwelt upon street cleanliness; the week before the students visited homes and helped women clean the interiors of their cramped shelters in the camp. After only five months on the job as an UNRWA health education worker, Othman has organized cleanliness campaigns in the four refugee camps, including Arrub, in the Hebron area on Jordan's West Bank which has been under Israeli occupation since 1967.

A few days later, at UNRWA's Jabalia health centre in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip, health education worker Abdul-Salaam Kahlot was standing in front of more than 100 women, each covering her head with a white gauzey veil and each carrying a child on her lap. Before disbursing additional UNRWA powdered milk rations to these nursing mothers, Kahlot and a practical nurse on the maternal and child health clinic staff demonstrated how the whole milk and skim milk powders should be properly mixed and under what hygienic conditions.

On the same day, only a few kilometers away at Jabalia Preparatory Girls' School A, UNRWA senior health education worker Abdul-Rahman Khalidi engaged in a question-and-answer session about cholera with 30 school girls as guest lecturer in a special health education course on "Health in Family Life," which is unique to UNRWA preparatory schools in Gaza.

The activities of these three health education workers are just a sampling of the specific daily tasks of UNRWA health educators, some of whom have been on the job for the past 24 years.

Working as a co-ordinator of school, health centre and community health activities, the

health education worker relates to every aspect of the Agency's health programme, including communicable disease control, environmental health, school health, maternal and child health, nutrition and supplementary feeding, and medical care.

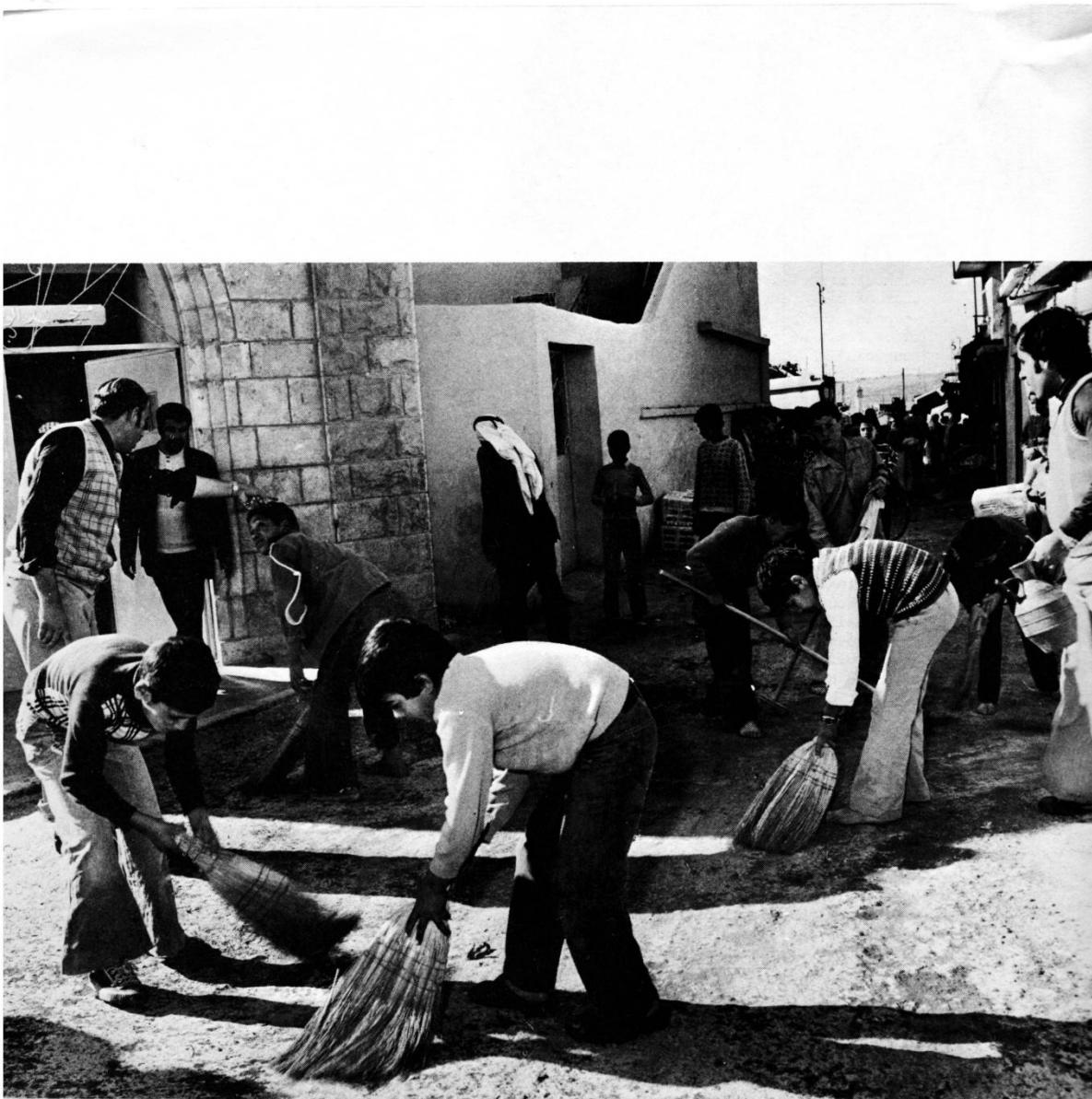
His major tasks are to disseminate information about proper health practices, to create awareness about health problems, to motivate the refugee population to adopt preventive measures regarding those problems and to reinforce improved health behaviour.

As the refugee population has become more educated -- through UNRWA's universally offered elementary and preparatory school programme -- and increasingly exposed to the mass media, the techniques, methods and style of health education have also changed. For the Agency's original health education workers, their adopted profession has necessitated considerable change and refreshment on the job.

When UNRWA's health education programme started in 1954, the health education worker tended to focus on the health needs of one camp or locale, which were tackled on a singular basis. Today, the programme is formulated Agency-wide and communicated through an annual health theme, which is divided into 12 monthly health campaigns. The health education worker serves as a catalyst among all the health education activities, which are simultaneously conducted by doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers, sanitation workers, food handlers and camp services officers in UNRWA's five administrative fields.

"The health education worker is least effective if he wants to work alone," remarked Mr. Shawqi Hasna, UNRWA Health Educator who is responsible for the health education programme spanning east Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, and West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Agency's 21 health education workers conduct their activities wherever the refugee community assembles -- the market-place, health centres, schools, kindergartens, the maternal and child health centres, sewing centres, youth activity



centres and teacher training centres -- and in homes. Generally his major points of contact with the Palestine refugee population are in schools and health centres, but being neither a nurse nor a teacher, the health education worker has the additional burden of convincing others of his competencies and demonstrating his usefulness.

The educational standard among UNRWA health education workers varies from a secondary school certificate-holder to a university graduate, and depending on when they entered the health education programme, their professional training consisted of a three-month to year-long formal training programme or about one year of on-the-job training only.

Without professional training equivalent to that of his peers in the health centres and schools, the health education worker sometimes feels he is falling between two mountains, commented Dr. Kamal Abdalla, Field Health Officer in the Gaza Strip. Additionally, the health education worker's opportunities for promotion with UNRWA are more restricted than those of a teacher or a nurse, and the Agency's recruitment efforts are sometimes hindered.

But beyond the professional and academic qualifications, the health education worker's personality is a major factor in accomplishing his tasks. "If he can't knock on a refugee's door and face rejection from the person inside, he's unlikely to be a good health education worker," remarked Dr. Saleem Husseini, the West Bank's Field Health Officer. Most persons associated with the health education programme concur with Dr. Husseini's remarks and stress the determination and stamina required of the health education worker, who often serves a refugee population of more than 100,000.

Within the community of 1.7 million registered refugees, there are different types of refugee communities and the approach of the health education worker varies in response to the specific needs and background of his area's population. Perhaps the greatest changes in the content of the health education programme have been wrought by the impact of education on refugee girls, who as daughters, wives and mothers have a tremendous impact on the level of health, nutrition and hygiene within the family. In 1977/78, 48 percent of the 300,000 enrolled in UNRWA/Unesco schools are girls.

While health education is not a separate course in UNRWA/Unesco schools, the most fruitful work of the health education worker often takes place within the 595 Agency schools, which contain the younger and more impressionable refugee population.

Since 1962, UNRWA has produced a school health calendar which is the backbone of the school health programme. The calendar, distributed annually to more than 7,500 classrooms, amplifies the Agency's annual

health theme. It has monthly sub-themes which are pictorially illustrated and companion notes below to guide the classroom teacher in health discussions. The health education workers also regularly visit the schools to expand upon the health topics discussed, and supplementary health pamphlets are distributed during the school year. The ubiquitous nature of the calendar throughout the schools and its continued use for 15 years has made it a regular feature of UNRWA education.

In general, school health activities are planned by a school health committee, consisting of pupils and teachers, who along with the health educator plan displays, exhibitions and intermural competitions.

The major question facing the health education workers after more than 20 years of an UNRWA health education programme is: How effectively have they performed? While it is almost impossible scientifically to determine the impact of health education, due to its long-range goals of attitude and behavioural change and its overlap with other important factors such as improved socio-economic conditions, it is clear that the refugee population and environment, despite privation, are cleaner and healthier than before. The reduction in the incidence of communicable diseases among the refugee population and the higher level of environmental health -- including better garbage disposal, an increase in private latrines, less soil pollution and better personal hygiene -- are attributable in part to health education.

According to Mr. Khalil Labadi, senior health education worker on the West Bank and one of UNRWA's first health education workers, "in spite of all the difficulties, people have benefited from the health education programme. For those who haven't learned from others (i.e. from medical personnel, teachers, and the mass media) have learned from us."

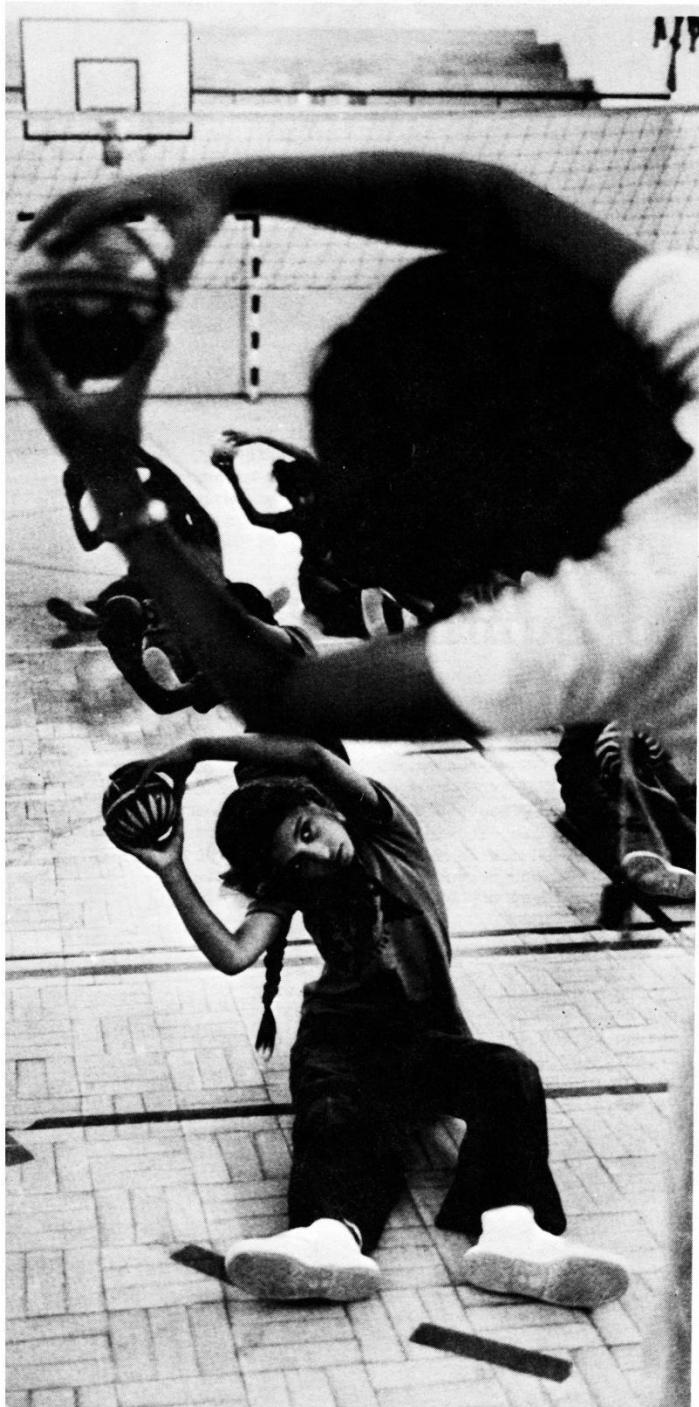


## **Flashback to Summer**

With blustery winds and cold rain keeping them indoors now, looking back on the delights of summer is a special treat for the 51 girls who attended the first summer camp for refugee orphan girls in Jordan.

Bonfires, songfests, arts and crafts, sports and games, home economics, sewing and reading were among the activities shared by the 10- to 13-year-old girls selected by UNRWA social workers in different refugee camps in the country. Each of the girls has lost one or both parents.

For most of the girls, the three extraordinary weeks of summer camp at the UNRWA

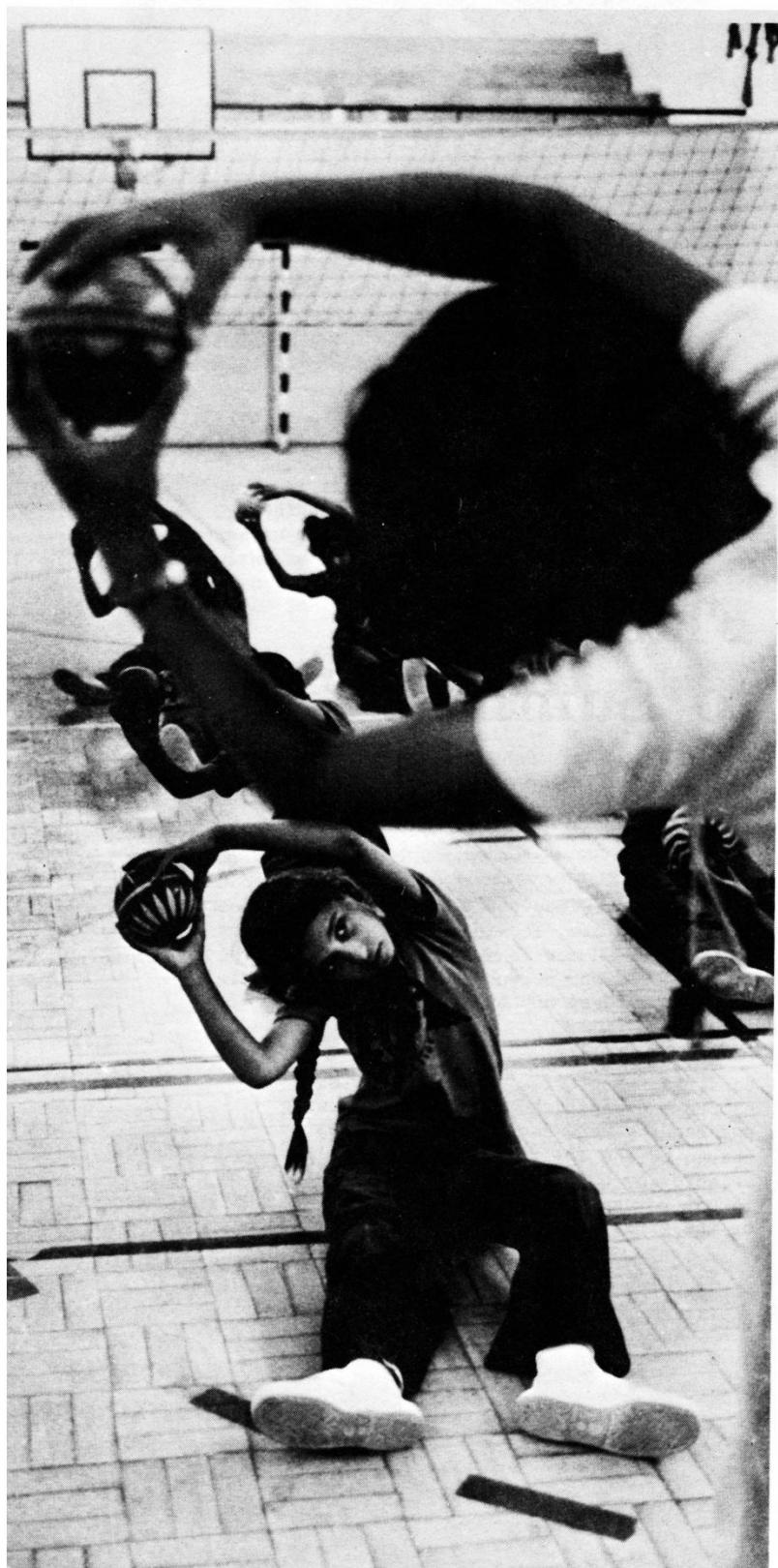


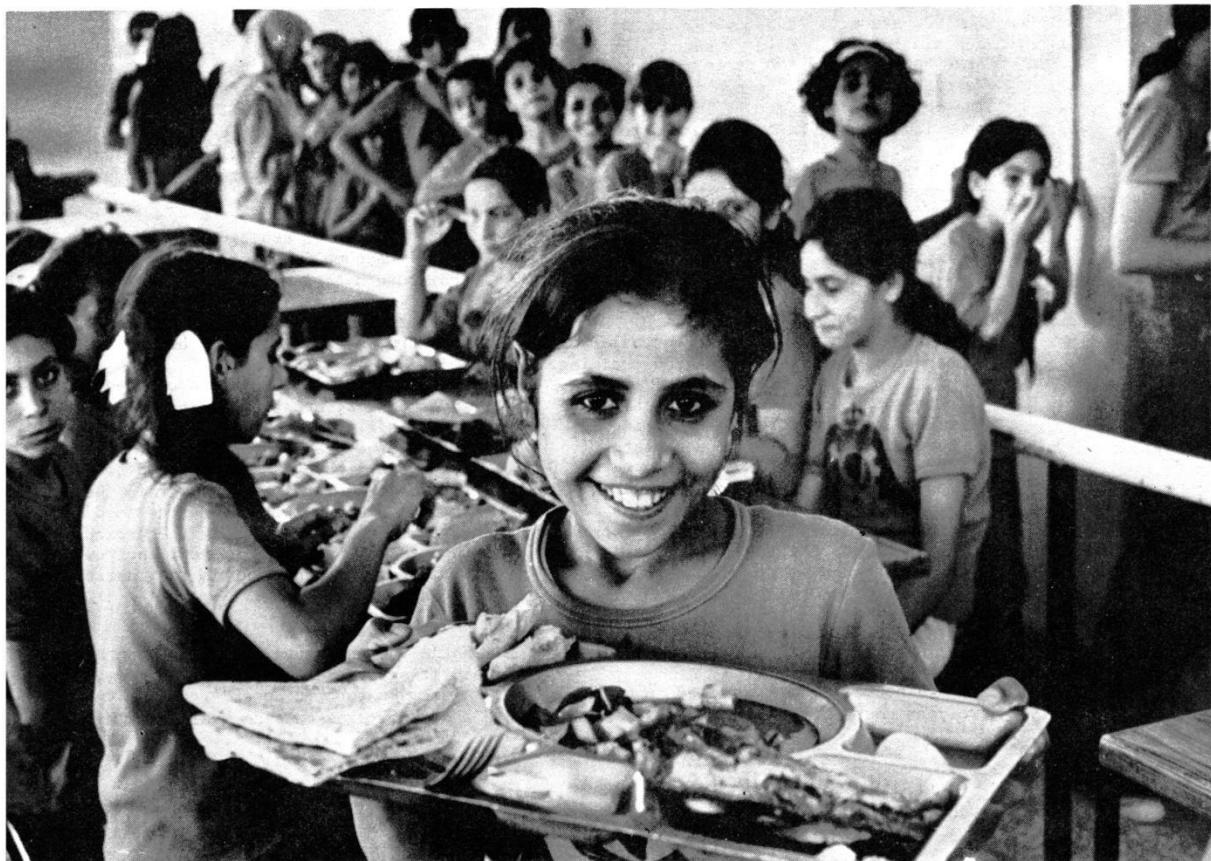
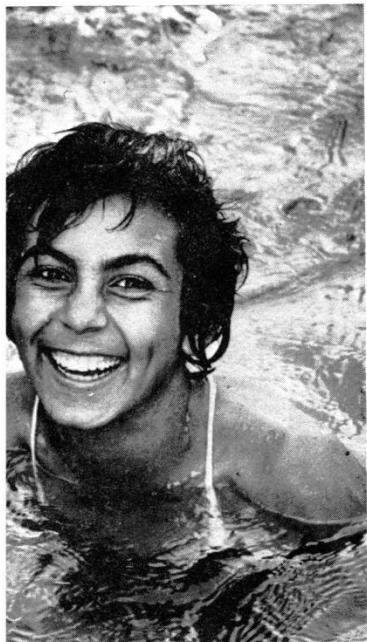
Amman Training Centre were their first venture outside of the refugee camp environment. Supervised by volunteers, mainly UNRWA teachers and two volunteers from the British charitable organization UNIPAL, the girls lived, ate, and played at the centre together. Outside field trips were also included in their schedule.

Three ample meals and two snacks were provided each day to the girls, and upon joining the camp each received a suitable camp wardrobe and supplies including two pair of jeans, two tee-shirts and two pajamas each, plus soap, toothbrush and toothpaste.

The total cost of the summer session was \$6,500 raised from voluntary contributions and generous donations from charitable organizations and members of Amman's local and international community who took responsibility for the camp with the endorsement of UNRWA.

Already some of the volunteer organizers of this past summer's camp are looking forward to planning this year's camp session. And summer camps for refugee girls and for boys in Gaza and the West Bank as well as Jordan are expected to be held again in 1978.





# Teachers reap benefits from in-service training

Like a traditional coffeehouse hubbly-bubbly, the UNRWA/Unesco Institute of Education is constantly percolating -- in the Institute's case with innovative responses to the training needs of the Agency's more than 8,700 teachers.

As an integral part of the UNRWA/Unesco Department of Education, the Institute has been providing on-the-job, or in-service, training for UNRWA teachers in five on-going and overlapping phases. Since 1964, it has professionally certified the vast majority of elementary and preparatory school teachers, provided preparatory teachers with specialized training, professionally guided key educational personnel, kept pace with curricular changes in five host educational systems, and given refresher courses and ad hoc courses to meet special needs.

In the 1977-78 school year more than 300,000 students in 595 UNRWA/Unesco schools in east Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip are affected by the Institute's effort to improve classroom instruction through training courses.

Within the past 13 years the Institute has reversed the position of underqualified and unqualified staffing within UNRWA/Unesco schools, and hence has improved the quality of education for Palestine refugee children. Whereas in 1964, about 90 percent of the Agency's teachers lacked certification, today 91 percent of the teachers are fully certified and a large number have received specialized training.

This year, about 1,100 UNRWA teachers are enrolled in the Institute's offering of 23 courses in UNRWA's five administrative fields. The courses originate in direct response to the needs of each field and are supervised by Institute field representatives and subject supervisors attached to the field education departments in Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the West Bank and to the Education Development Centres in East Jordan and the Gaza Strip.

All trainees, whether enrolled in one- or two-year courses, attend weekly seminars

under the guidance of the Institute and partake of face-to-face and mass media instructional methods such as self-study assignments, demonstration lessons on closed circuit television and residential summer courses, all culminating in an assessment of the teacher's classroom practices.

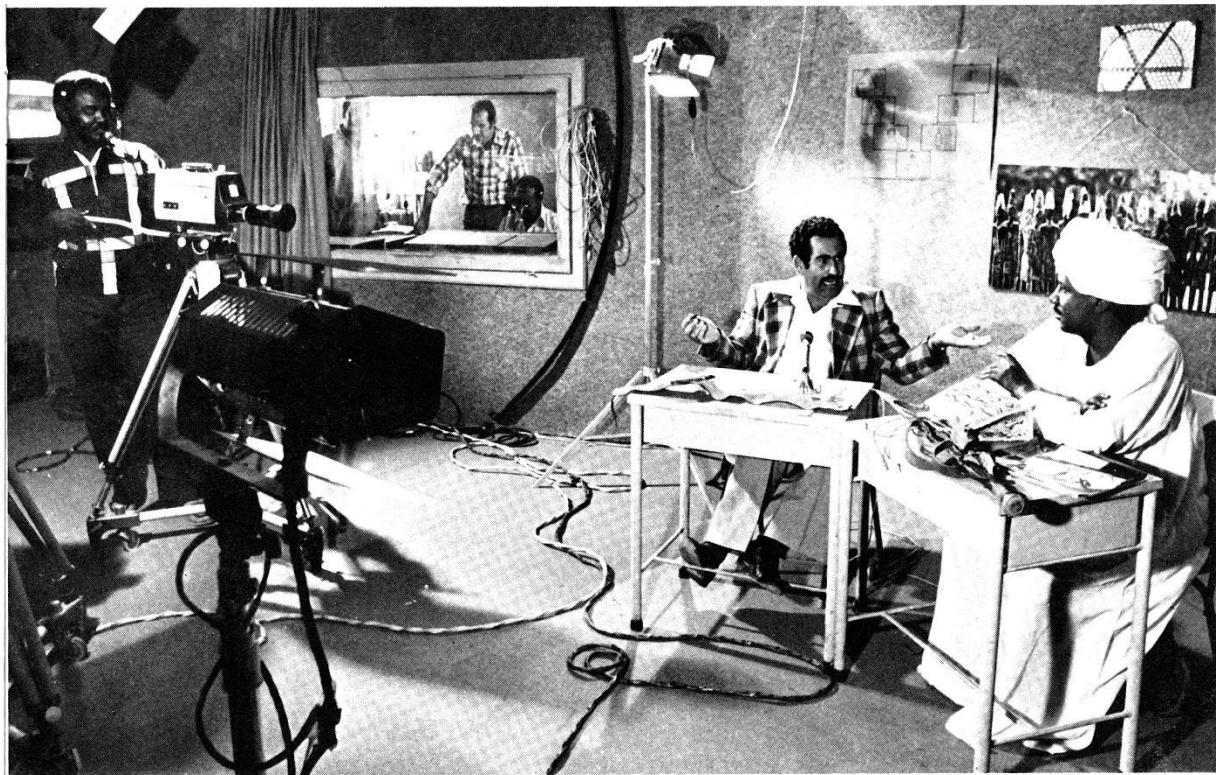
The Institute's pioneering use of a combination of direct and indirect instructional methods, known as the "integrated multi-media approach", has gained recognition in centres of learning throughout the Arabic-speaking world. So far, the governments of Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Oman, Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic have adopted the Institute's multi-media approach for their own in-service teacher training programmes, and the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen are taking steps to do so.

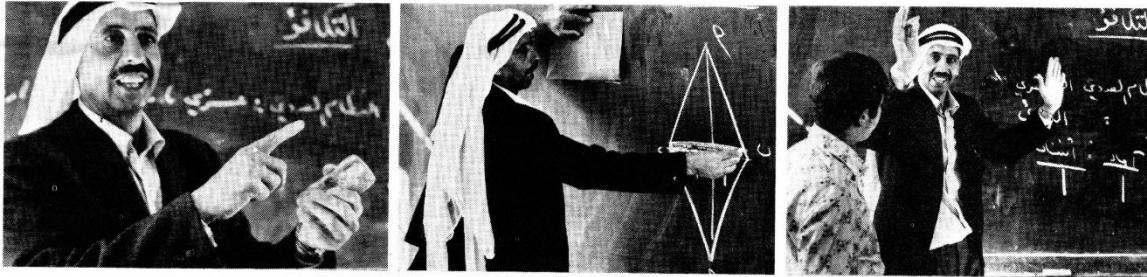
The Institute's staff is increasingly providing organizational, advisory and consultative services to the interested governments, and to date, more than 400 Arab educators outside the Agency have benefited from the Institute's orientation and on-the-job training courses.

Now that the basic tasks of upgrading and certifying UNRWA teachers have been largely accomplished, according to the Institute's Acting Director Abdel Malik Nashif, the Institute is looking ahead at the future needs of the students and teachers in the Agency's schools.

The role of the teacher has changed, and in some ways, drastically, noted Mr. Nashif. The Institute's role is to prepare the teacher for whatever educational changes are required to meet the socio-cultural changes within the society as a whole. Beyond the need for certification and coping with curricular changes, "we need a permanent instrument of improvement and that is the Institute", he said.

While the Institute evaluates the trainees in its courses and in the classroom, it also asks for "feedback" from the trainees and encourages outside evaluation missions.





The evaluation criteria centre upon professional competence and teaching performance. However, as the following four profiles of experienced UNRWA teachers indicate, the benefit of the Institute is often less tangible but equally important in the lives of the trainees.

## Mohammed Abu-Hassan

Forty-two-year old Mohammed Abu-Hassan is the oldest student in his evening class at Bethlehem University where he is a third-year student in mathematics. By day, Mr. Abu-Hassan is a mathematics teacher at Dheisheh Preparatory Boys' School, an UNRWA/Unesco school in Dheisheh camp not far from Bethlehem.

An UNRWA teacher at Dheisheh for the past 16 years, he did not finish his secondary school certificate until 1961. But since then he has been seeking professional upgrading, including enrolment in the Institute's basic course and a further two years in its preparatory math course. Three years ago, he started upon his university education.

"Every teacher should further his abilities or not be a teacher," he commented in an interview over tea at the school. Mr. Abu-Hassan, who wears the traditional Arab headdress, said his decision to attend university in mid-life was prompted by his experiences with the Institute's courses. The entry into university was easy for him personally, he said, because many substantive matters in his university course-work were already covered in the in-service training course.

Paying his own fees, which currently amount to about 100 Israeli lira per credit hour, he is taking 11 credit hours this semester. Since starting in 1974, he has maintained a "B" average.

Abu-Hassan reported that he is encouraged by his UNRWA/Unesco supervisors, who facilitate his studies. "I'm preparing a term paper on the Institute of Education and the Institute's field representatives are helping me," he said through an interpreter.

The benefits of being a university student have also affected his students and family. In his classroom, a poster reads in Arabic "If you make a mistake, I won't discipline you. I will help you."

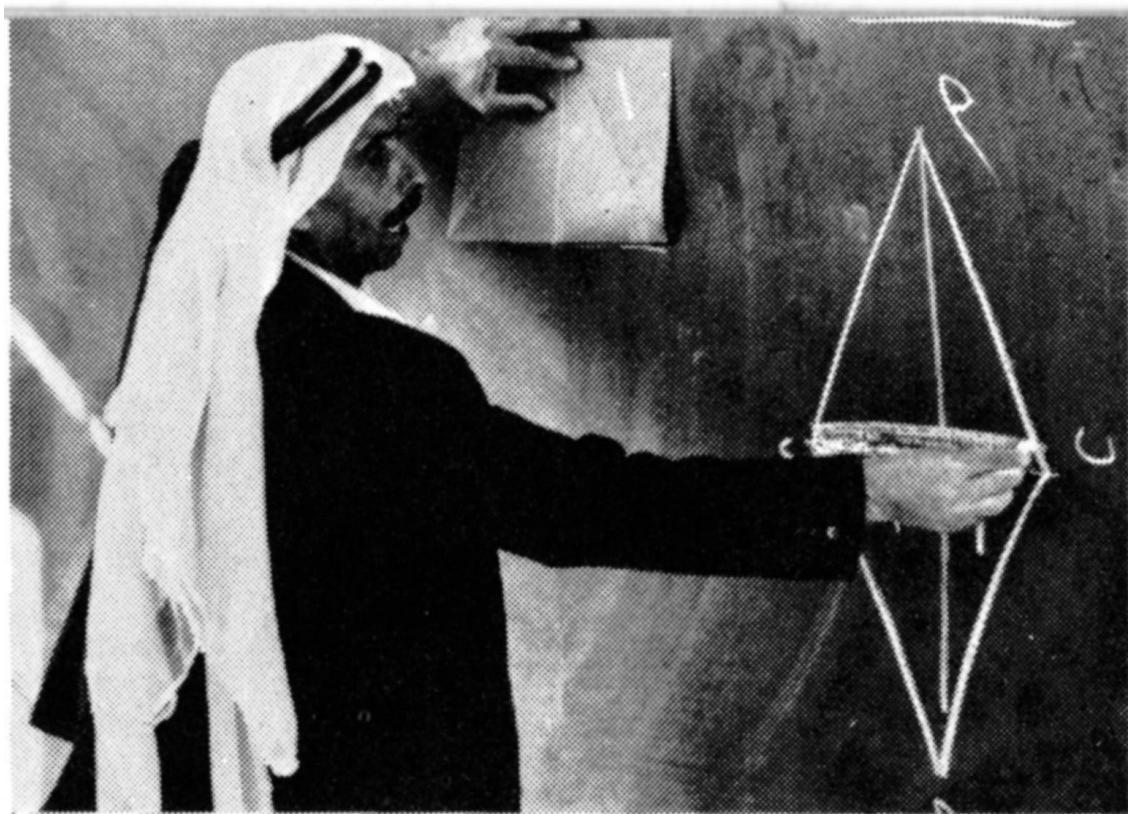
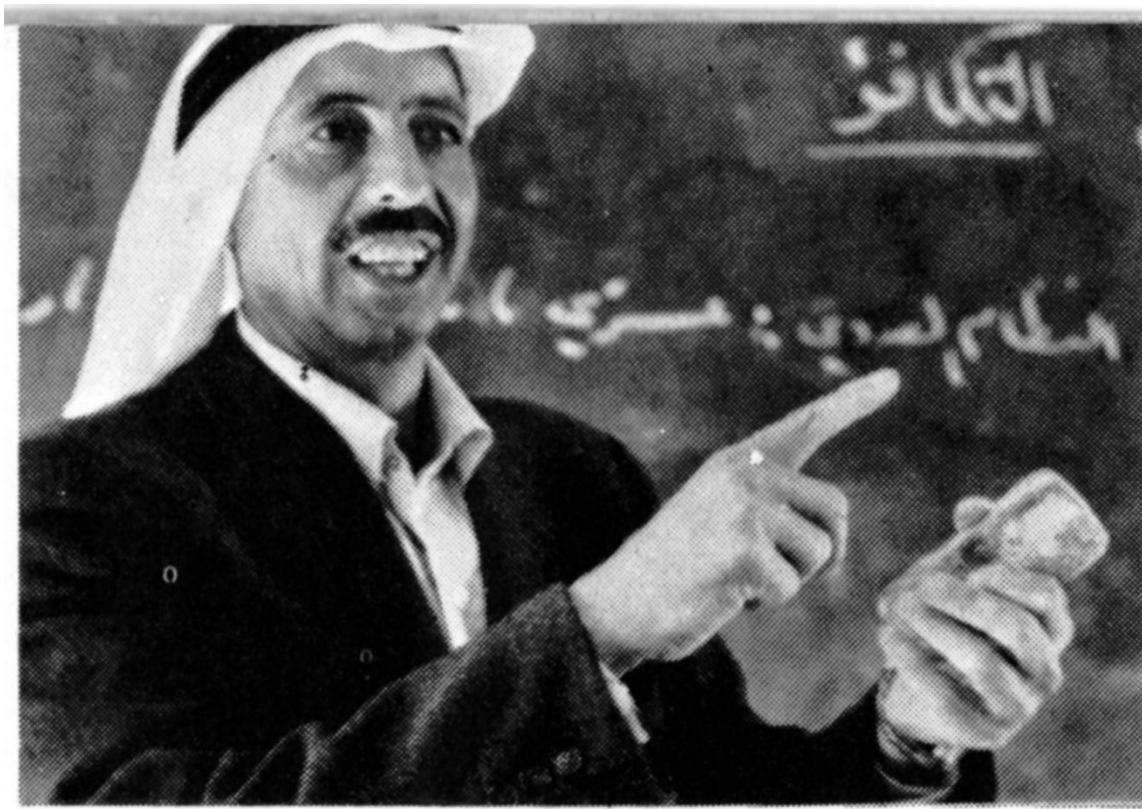
"As a university student, I learned to love my students more. As a student myself, I learned how nice it is to study in a democratic atmosphere and to have a teacher help me," he said.

Also at home, his children are now inspired to do their best in school," he commented. His eldest son is a second-year university student in Egypt, and Mr. Abu-Hassan hopes that his other children will follow suit.

## Sarah Salah

Turning off the main road to Bethlehem onto the dusty, windy road which leads to Aida Preparatory Girls' School, one suddenly encounters a concrete wall studded with wilting and gnarled trees. Beyond the wall is a rented house which serves as the UNRWA/Unesco school for 548 girls in two shifts. The ten rooms in the house and its two corridors are fully utilized as classrooms, library and teachers' meeting room.

Miss Sarah Salah has been a head teacher here for five years. In her 16 years as an UNRWA teacher, Miss Salah has taken the UNRWA/Unesco Institute of Education's







basic course for teacher certification, a specialized subject course, the head teachers' course and most recently an educational evaluation course -- altogether seven years of on-the-job training. Before becoming a teacher, she had finished secondary school.

For her professionally, the Institute's courses have had a significant impact on her work and her opportunities for advancement.

"The Institute has enlightened us educationally and has done a lot for all of us -- supervisors, head teachers and teachers," she said in an interview in her neatly organized office with white-washed walls and blue gingham curtains.

"The greatest benefit of the Institute is that it taught us what to teach and how to teach and has acquainted us with the latest educational methods," she added.

Prior to Miss Salah's tenure as head teacher, Aida school, which as a rented facility lacks fundamental classroom and school equipment, suffered from absenteeism, poor student performance and a high drop-out rate. In the past few years, however, the issue of absenteeism has receded, and the students are performing well on the system-wide examinations. The issue of student withdrawal from school, due to the need for a girl to help in the home or pressure for an early marriage does persist, though through community

involvement, Miss Salah does try to persuade parents to allow their daughters to stay in school

In the past few years, the girls have changed a lot, remarked Miss Salah. Previously a girl's teacher was considered right in her views simply because she was a teacher. But now the students analyze and criticize their teachers, and do not take their words for granted. "Their general knowledge and maturity are also greater," she added.

In terms of the impact of the Institute's courses on her own career, Miss Salah in hindsight values the head teachers' course most.

"That course taught me something important. Before I used to spend two or three days thinking about an idea before putting it into action. Sometimes the result was good, but now I make a plan, do research on everything, consider what obstacles I'm likely to have, plan how to overcome them and where to get the money."

"In addition, we follow-up and don't leave anything for random development," she said.

This organizational method, she feels, has influenced the teaching staff and students at Aida. "A leader should create leaders," and by involving her teachers and students in the school's goals, Miss Salah's aim is to lead.





## Ibrahim Juda

The lovely ripening date trees which brighten the 16-kilometer ride from Gaza Town to Deir el-Balah seem like red fire-works fading into the horizon in October. Camels and bedouin tents dot the roadside.

Desert and Mediterranean foliage merge on the drive-way to Deir el-Balah Elementary School B where 242 boys and 179 girls jointly attend classes.

"Five years ago, the boys and girls would not share the same desk, but now they do so naturally," remarked head teacher Ibrahim Juda. In the sandy open court-yard, cactus, orange trees and eucalyptus impinge upon the yellow walls which characterize UNRWA/Unesco schools in the Gaza Strip.

In his office, Mr. Juda proudly shows the artwork of his predominantly-bedouin students who have also gaily painted the school's exterior walls. Mr. Juda, who writes children's books in his spare time, enjoys the artistry of his students.

Prior to becoming a head teacher five years ago, Mr. Juda, who is a university graduate in Arabic, undertook the Institute of Education's basic certifying

course and more recently has taken the head teachers' course. From the latter, he especially relished his newly acquired skills in administration and evaluation, as well as guidance in adapting the Egyptian curriculum to the Gaza environment. UNRWA/Unesco schools in the Gaza Strip, which has been under Israeli-occupation since 1967, follow the Egyptian curriculum for elementary and preparatory schools.

The sounds of children repeating their numbers in unison in English wafted through his office as Mr. Juda discussed the teaching methods presented in the Institute's courses which assisted him. "I learned to plan my teaching objectives, classroom activities and evaluation methods on parallel tracks," he said. While this method does not take into account the accumulative approach to learning, it did help him in his day-to-day lesson planning, he said.

As a head teacher, Mr. Juda would like to see his own teaching staff take more initiative in planning and creating learning materials for their classrooms. "I'm trying to inspire initiative with my own example," he said.

## Fatma Ansari

Beneath the historic walls of the Old City of Jerusalem and within view of the golden Dome of the Rock, 484 girls in two shifts attend Jerusalem Preparatory Girls' School. The facilities are not a proper school building, but a rented house with an extraordinary stable floor which has been re-surfaced as a play area for the UNRWA/Unesco school.

Miss Fatma Ansari has been a head teacher here for 11 years. As head teacher and a teacher of religion, she sees most of her students weekly, and thus has her finger on the school's pulse. In her 20 years as



an UNRWA teacher, Miss Ansari has taken the Institute's basic certifying course, a specialized course for teachers of Arabic, and the head teachers' course. Because she became a teacher directly following completion of only preparatory schooling, she has made strenuous efforts to catch up academically and become professionally qualified, all while on the job.

Definitely a self-starter, first she finished her secondary school certificate then enrolled in the Institute's courses, and this summer completed her bachelor's degree in Arabic by correspondence with a Lebanese university.

Asked what course she would like to take next, she softly replied, "I think it is time for a little rest."

As a head teacher, Miss Ansari found the head teachers' course particularly relevant to her work and most tutorial sessions "lively" because they involved current school problems, such as absenteeism or the question of what improvements could be made for a generally weak class.

Noting a major difference between her handling of her job before and after the course, she said she benefited largely from the planning and organizational aspects of the course curriculum. She also learned to nurture her own 20 staff members and is now less reluctant to deal with internal staffing problems.

In general, the course tutors were receptive to the trainees' questions and problems, she said, although at times, trainees were not well prepared or the tutor lacked time to read the trainee's prepared assignments.

Her school now has an annual plan, and last year its goal was to enrich the library. "We managed to buy shelves, put the books inside and now we're encouraging our girls to borrow and read them," she said. The goal for this year? "We're still deciding upon that," she answered.

# Quick measures halt spread of cholera

The odour of burning rubbish hung thinly in the air as the inhabitants of El-Hussein camp in Amman, Jordan, disposed of their refuse as a precaution against the spread of cholera.

For the second consecutive year, there was a wide-spread outbreak of cholera in the Middle East, claiming more than 70 lives and putting into hospital an estimated 3,500 persons, mainly in the Syrian Arab Republic. Neighbouring Jordan was less severely affected.

In El-Hussein Camp, a mammoth Jordanian Army bulldozer scooped up mounds of garbage and deposited them in a waiting dump truck, which temporarily blocked the ribbon-like thoroughfare linking the refugee camp with a modest Amman neighbourhood.

Surprisingly, to anyone familiar with driving habits in the region, none of the waiting drivers honked in impatience. For most residents, alerted to the presence of cholera in the city, clearing the camp of menacing garbage in the midst of a potential epidemic was more important than a personal appointment.

Cholera, characterized by acute diarrhoea and vomiting, is spread by human carriers through contaminated food and water.

A few hundred metres up the road in a plain stone and concrete compound is the UNRWA El-Hussein health centre, which became a focal point of camp activity during the Agency's anti-cholera campaign. Through the health committee associated with the centre, including doctors, nurses, health education worker, sanitation worker, camp services officer and representative teachers, UNRWA rapidly disseminated information about the disease -- its spread and prevention, launched community-wide sanitation drives, and vaccinated the school population and anyone else among registered refugees who wanted to be vaccinated.

"As soon as we were alerted to cholera in Syria, we started taking precautionary measures here," said Dr. Naji Ayyash, UNRWA Field Health Officer in Jordan.

Since the only means of combatting cholera are improvements in environmental and

sanitary conditions, the campaign stressed personal hygiene, proper sanitation and food handling, according to Mr. Shawqi Hasna, UNRWA health educator.

On a typical day in September, during the peak of the outbreak, scores of UNRWA refugees patiently bided their time, sitting on hard benches or squatting on the floor in congested hallways and waiting rooms, to see one of El-Hussein Centre's three medical doctors. Most of the cases were routine; none involved cholera.

However, the person-to-person encounter between centre visitor and a medical officer was viewed as a significant opportunity to communicate correct information about cholera and proper health practices to the centre visitors.

In a packed sideroom, Miss Fariel Ghoneim, one of four UNRWA health education workers in the East Jordan field, lectured on cholera to 45 women and their children who were at the centre for routine maternal and child health care. Straining her voice to be heard above the cacaphony of whimpering children and talkative mothers, the 30-year-old health worker explained how cholera is transmitted, what kills the water-borne bacteria, and how water, food and waste should be handled to prevent the spread of the disease.

Most of the women's questions centred on how to prepare safe food for their families and what to eat and not to eat. Miss Ghoneim, a sociology graduate who was trained on-the-job by UNRWA as a health education worker, advised them to avoid fresh fruits and vegetables, especially grapes and figs, and all produce which could be irrigated by contaminated water. Otherwise, she told the women, cook all vegetables, serve food immediately while it is hot, and store it with a cover if no refrigeration is available.

At the end of her 20-minute lecture, Miss Ghoneim, who is the only female health education worker among 21 in the five UNRWA administrative fields, confessed hoarseness but readied herself for the next group.

As the principal health education worker servicing six UNRWA health centres in the Amman area with a combined registered refugee population of 80,142, she cannot let up her pace.

"My biggest frustration is not being able to see these women every day. I'm at one camp one day and the next day at another. Each day I'm missing so many people."

As the cholera outbreak was reaching a peak in Jordan, Miss Ghoneim and her three colleagues in a typical week talked to about 3,500 people in visits, lectures and informal talks at health centres, schools, youth activity centres and women's sewing centres.

At the health centres, in the absence of the health education worker, the task was shared by the entire centre staff. During moments of personal contact, each staff member can possibly improve or correct health practices, according to Dr. Nizzam Nazer, one of El-Hussein centre's medical officers.

"In our experience, if we talk to a woman, she carries our message to her family and neighbours," he added.

During a health crisis, he suggested, doctors, nurses and teachers who have direct daily contacts with adults and children are possibly the most effective communicators.

"Normally we try to ensure a safe water supply, refuse disposal and general cleanliness in the camp," Dr. Nazer continued.

While such conditions are usually checked on a weekly health inspection tour of the camp, during the threat of cholera such activities are supervised throughout the day. The health inspection tour involves visits to houses, the market-place, and schools and street observation.

At El-Hussein camp the extensive anti-cholera effort, involving joint community, UNRWA and Jordanian Government support, proved itself effective. Only seven cases of cholera were confirmed in the densely populated camp. In northern Amman, un-



officially some 31,000 people live within the boundaries of its 90 acres.

"But we won't allow ourselves a false sense of safety," cautioned Dr. Abdul-Salam Abu-Awad, the centre's senior medical officer.

"We're not an island here, and this environment with its dense population and inadequate drainage system is vulnerable to cholera and other infectious diseases. We must take precautions. We're intensifying our efforts so that we have no more cases."

In the instance of a confirmed cholera case, the camp's health officers immediately contacted the patient's family and his direct contacts of the previous few days, explained Dr. Abu-Awad.

"We tried to locate the sanitation facilities that may have contributed to the disease. For example, it could be a simple water jug that is improperly used for washing or drinking."

But since cholera recurred in 1977 and could recur again, the UNRWA health team must continuously stress the principles of prevention, he emphasized.



# Back to school in Lebanon

The school looks neat and spruce; walls freshly painted, colourful curtains on the windows, and in the entrance hall a number of glass cabinets containing books, scientific equipment, games, musical instruments and wooden and metal articles made by the pupils. The head teacher, Fayed Akki, cheerfully admits, "My work is my hobby. As I am single, I can say that I am married to my school. I spend practically all the day here and the boys are free to come back in the afternoon for extra-curricular activities."

On one afternoon there is an art group, on another a scouts' meeting. Educational films lent by cultural institutions are shown once a week and the lending library contains several hundred Arabic and English books. As for the games, there is a huge choice including Monopoly and checkers, plasticine and puzzles, as well as several card games.

Yarmouk Elementary Boy's School in Bourj el-Barajneh now has 310 pupils. Before the 1975-76 civil conflict in Lebanon it had 360 pupils, but some refugee families have been displaced from the area. Today 11 UNRWA teachers are at their desks, and seem as keen as Mr. Akki to impart to the boys the knowledge they eagerly seek. The head teacher is in close touch with the children's parents, who are very proud of "their" school and who greatly helped during the civil disturbances to preserve it from damage, although the premises were occupied for six months by displaced refugees. When the worst troubles started in this Beirut suburb, the head teacher packed the school's valuables such as slide and film projectors, tape recorders and cassettes into his car and took them to his apartment. Then he locked the school office, which was not touched by the temporary occupants. Most of the extra-curricular equipment has been bought by Mr. Akki with the enthusiastic approval of the parents who are happy to contribute one or two dollars yearly for this purpose.

Yarmouk Elementary Boys' School was one of the least damaged UNRWA/Unesco schools in the Beirut area. During the civil war, fighting was heaviest in and around Beirut where nine buildings housing 12 Agency

schools, half of them operating on double shift, were destroyed - such as the seven schools in Dekwaneh, a camp in Tell Zaatar quarter which was razed to the ground - or had to be closed because they were located in areas not considered safe for Palestinians. In other parts of the country, fighting and shelling were usually sporadic and the schools were only briefly closed.

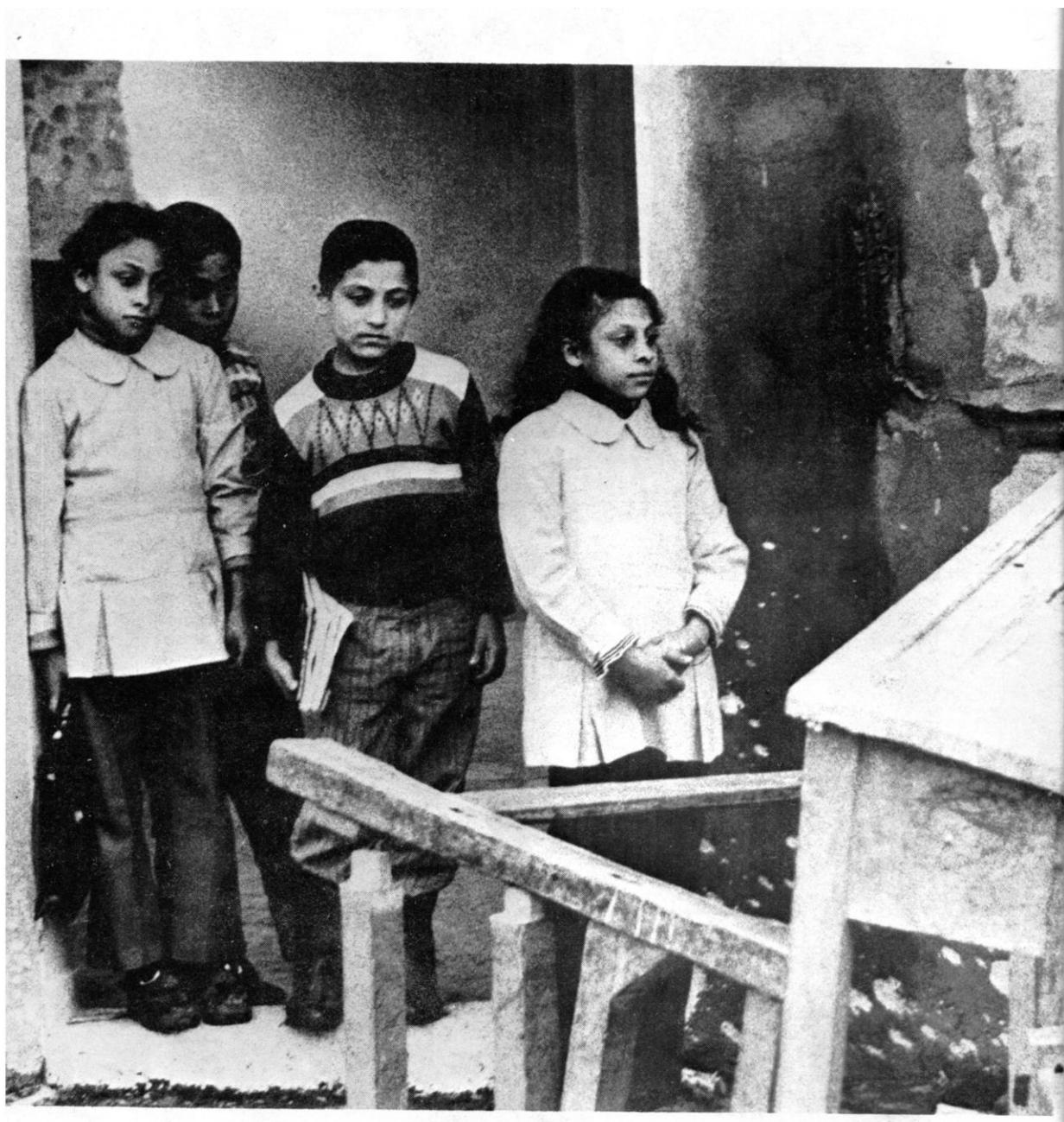
In Tyre in south Lebanon, for instance, Agency schools closed two weeks early in 1976. The problem in south Lebanon was of quite another order; the influx of hundreds of refugee children displaced from other parts of the country, particularly Beirut, into already crowded UNRWA/Unesco schools.

Palestine Elementary and Preparatory Boys' School in Tyre is near Burj el-Shemali camp which houses more than 9,000 registered refugees. Head teacher Yussef Kott who has worked there since 1956, now has 991 pupils - 544 boys and 447 girls - in six elementary and 16 preparatory class sections. His staff includes 26 teachers and two handicraft instructors, and although busy with administrative tasks, he still teaches seven periods of English a week. "I am convinced," he says, "that a good teacher is just like a pianist; he needs to keep in practice. By giving my lessons I understand the problems of both children and their teachers much better."

Mr. Kott is another believer in extra-curricular activities, but in his school they were mainly concerned with its buildings and grounds. Twenty years ago, the site was completely bare; now, thanks to the combined work of pupils and teachers, there are flowers and no less than 400 trees, some of them huge and imposing, others still tiny, all of them well cared for. The playground and pathways have been paved, also by the joint efforts and financial contributions of children and staff; cement was bought and mixed by the boys under the supervision of some teachers, while the girls carried water from the fountain, and mixed teams laid the concrete.

Since 1950 when UNRWA operations began, the Agency has considered education one of the most important aspects of its task. Today







half of the Palestine refugees are below 20 years of age, and nearly half of UNRWA's \$134 million budget in 1977 was allocated to the education programme, carried out with the technical co-operation of Unesco. This programme has shown a striking growth; in 1950-51, 43,000 refugee children went to Agency schools; in 1976-77 there were more than 296,000 pupils of whom 37,000 were in primary and preparatory Agency schools in Lebanon, receiving 10 years of schooling.

During the civil war more than 60 per cent of UNRWA's school services in Lebanon continued almost normally, with work in the Beirut area and in the Bekaa valley being the most adversely affected. Schools outside Beirut opened around mid-October in 1976-77. But then there was an escalation of fighting, which subsided only when the Arab League Peace-keeping Force entered Lebanon in November.

From that time, schools occupied by displaced refugees gradually emptied, and indispensable repairs were carried out. Pupils of the 12 schools in and around Beirut which had been destroyed or closed were absorbed into other Agency schools, generally outside Beirut.

Apart from the dislocations of the refugee population in Lebanon and the damage to UNRWA/Unesco schools, UNRWA had to face the problems of damaged or destroyed school furniture and of textbooks at the end of the civil war.

After the destruction and looting accompanying war (some displaced families burned furniture to bake bread, as no fuel was available) 6,250 new school benches and desks were needed. The Agency ordered 3,000 of them, but another 3,250 are still needed at a cost of \$130,000, and even more may be needed, once the excessive double-shifting in overcrowded schools ceases. The schools also need more chairs, tables and cupboards, estimated to cost about \$30,000.

Normally UNRWA recovers most of its textbooks at the end of each scholastic year. During the disturbances, however, many books were destroyed or looted, and reserves stored in UNRWA's Base Warehouse in Beirut were burnt when some of the buildings were hit by rockets. Thus, very few books indeed were recovered in Beirut, and in the rest of Lebanon only about one-third of the previous years' books were available when schools re-opened. Until UNRWA was able to buy and distribute textbooks, its teachers were encouraged to stencil or dictate lessons. By March 1977, 60 per cent of the books needed had been distributed and by the end of May only about five per cent were still lacking.

As a rule, a refugee child attends a government or private school where no UNRWA/Unesco school is available. With many schools damaged during the hostilities, places in the Lebanese Government schools are so scarce that many more refugee children have to attend private institutions or no school at all. In the past, UNRWA has partly subsidized private primary and preparatory school fees. Now as private school fees have increased more than ten-fold and as many refugees are unemployed or homeless, some additional assistance from UNRWA may be desirable to make it possible for more children to attend schools.

In Lebanon, the Agency's in-service teacher training courses were temporarily suspended during the fighting, but were renewed again for 377 UNRWA teachers in February 1977.

Before the civil conflict, the Agency's Siblin Training Centre in south Lebanon provided vocational training for 510 men and teacher training for 160 men and women. The Centre closed in August 1975, after graduating its second-year trainees, and fortunately re-opened in March 1977 for 200 men and women who had previously started their first year's training. And after a fresh in-take in October, there is now a total of 350 trainees at the Centre.



Ibrahim Abu-Hamad, principal of Siblin Centre, stayed with a skeleton staff of four throughout the civil war to protect the premises and equipment. There were periods of several days when they were cut off, but neighbouring farmers took advantage of breaks in the shelling to bring food.

In the classrooms today, the future secretaries are typing at considerable speed - in English as well as in Arabic - in the business and office practice course. In the public health inspection class, one of the trainees reports about his investigation of conditions in a nearby camp, and a lively discussion follows. The auto-mechanics listen to an instructor who explains why the carburetor is so often the reason for the malfunctioning of a car. The machinists-welders work out exquisitely exact spare parts for different machines.

In the dormitories, cleanliness and order are strictly applied and the beds appear to be as neatly made as the articles produced in the various workshops. The refectory, a huge room where 250 meals can be served at one sitting, is next to the big kitchen where lunch is being prepared: fish fillets, rice and beans, bread and fresh fruit.

While the young men are boarders at the Centre, the young women live outside and are picked up by buses, along with the staff, from Tyre, Sidon and Beirut. Trainees started their second year in September and will complete it in the first week of June 1978. There was a new intake of more than 150 in October for welders, sheetmetal workers, plumbers, architectural draughtsmen, refrigeration and air-conditioning mechanics.

Many of the trainees have lived through dreadful events during the 1975-76 civil conflict. But now they are cheerfully concentrating upon performing their work assignments, in preparation for the useful, permanent jobs they hope to get after graduation.

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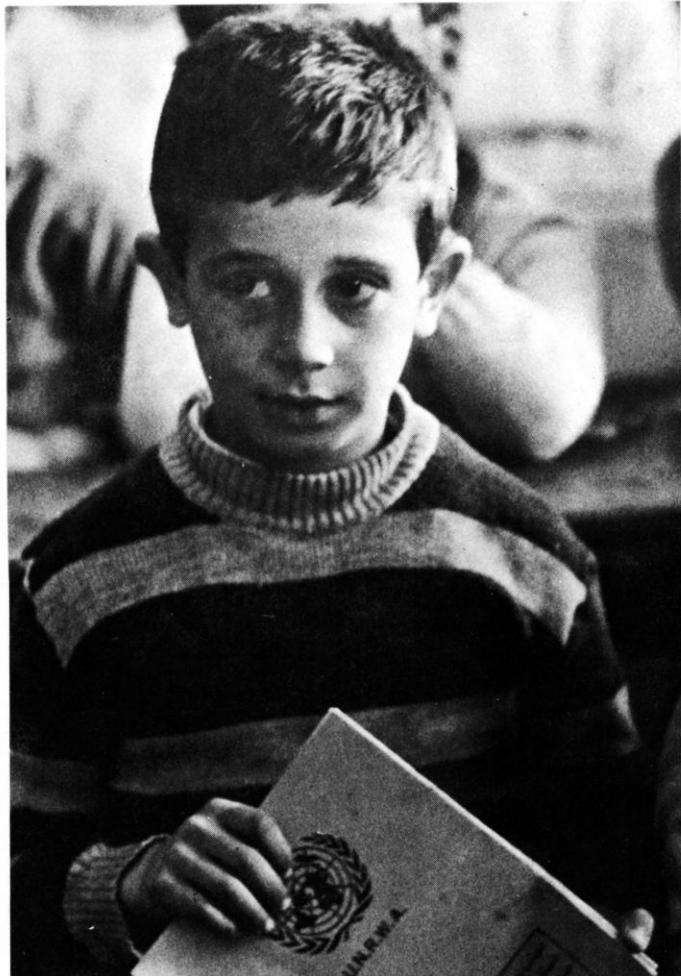
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