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comprehensive education service
for Palestine refugees

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NRWA

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Schools

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UNRWA'S IDENTITY CARD

THE PALESTINIANS OF LEBANON

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UNRWA last week
issued its latest apprai-
sal of the Palestinian
refugees under its care
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It reads as follows:
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operations in 1950
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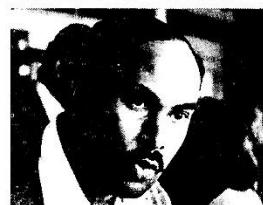
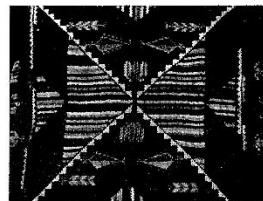
right to a good education.

How is UNRWA's
educational system
organised?

more than 333,000 students
(them girls)
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lestinian children - and three
years of preparatory education.

1 UNRWA News	UNRWA schools in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic have been saved again by last-minute contributions to the Agency but the threat continues for 1981.
2 30th Anniversary	The 30th anniversary of UNRWA's founding has received wide publicity during the past few months. Some comments are reported in this issue.
4 The Dream	A community centre built by students from the University of Jordan in a refugee neighbourhood in Amman has affected the lives of more than 400 families and is acting as a stimulus for other such projects.
6 Keeping Traditions	Traditional Palestinian embroidery was known for its delicacy. The tradition is being kept alive by many, and modified by others to reach new markets.
7 Palestine Portraits	A look at two Palestine refugees living in Jordan: both born about the time UNRWA was founded, 30 years ago.



Palestine Refugees Today

UNRWA Newsletter No. 94
November 1980

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United Nations Relief and Works Agency
for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

UNRWA NEWS

UNRWA and WHO

The 33rd World Health Assembly recently held in Geneva expressed its deep concern about the financial situation of UNRWA. The Assembly adopted a resolution thanking UNRWA for its "unfailing efforts" and requested the World Health Organisation's Director-General, Dr. Halfdan Mahler, "to continue his collaboration with UNRWA by all possible means and inasmuch as to ease the difficulties it is facing and increase the services it provides to the Palestinian people."

UNRWA's health programme for Palestine refugees is provided in collaboration with WHO.

Refugee total increases in 1980

The worldwide total of refugees has increased by nearly 3 million in two years, the U.S. Committee for Refugees reports. In its publication "1980 World Refugee Survey", the Committee reported 16 million uprooted people, compared to 13.2 million in 1978. The peak total in 16 years of Surveys was 17.5 million in 1970.

By region of origin the 1980 totals are: Asia 7.3 million (including 4 million displaced Cambodians); Africa 4 million; Middle East 3.3 million; Latin America 1 million; Eastern Europe 230,000.

Funds raised for refugees

A sponsored run took place during an open day held at UNRWA's Am-

man Training Centre recently under the patronage of Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan. About 50 UNRWA staff members participated to raise funds for projects that cannot be financed by UNRWA. Over 7,200 Jordanian dinars (about \$ 24,500) was raised. The money is being used to run camps for orphaned refugee children this year and to assist disabled persons next year. Last year's run raised almost 6,000 J.D.

New Directors named by UNRWA

UNRWA's West Bank and Syrian Arab Republic fields of operations have new Directors.

Roy E. Skinner, an Australian and former Deputy Director and Field Relief Services Officer in Gaza, has taken over as Director of UNRWA Operations in the West Bank. Mr. Skinner replaces George Galipeau, a Canadian, who is the new Director of UNRWA Affairs in the Syrian Arab Republic. Mr. Galipeau

succeeds Mr. Wilhelm af Sillen of Sweden, who is due for retirement.

More donations stave off school closing

During the past few months, UNRWA has received pledges of additional cash income from Iraq, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Norway, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States. Most of these pledges are in addition to the regular contributions of the countries concerned.

The new donations have reduced UNRWA's estimated 1980 deficit to about \$ 38 million and will allow the Agency to continue schools in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic until the end of 1980.

The school system will again be threatened in 1981. The projected budget for next year is \$ 231 million, an increase of \$ 20 million over the revised 1980 budget, and the shortfall of income could be as high as \$ 70-million.

EEC providing food to UNRWA

The European Economic Community is providing more than 81,000 tonnes of foodstuffs for Palestine refugees over a two-year period.

Under a convention signed in Vienna, the Community is supplying the food to UNRWA and will transport it to the Middle East for distribution under UNRWA's relief and supplementary feeding programmes. The convention covers calendar years 1979 and 1980. The EEC's total contribution for 1980 amounts to more than \$ 26

million in cash and food. In addition to this, member countries of the EEC are contributing individually a total of more than \$ 25 million in cash and food to UNRWA in 1980.

About 830,000 refugees are eligible for basic rations. The supplementary feeding programme benefits all children under age six, and older refugees who have a medical recommendation. The cost of supplementary feeding is borne by the EEC.



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PRESS REACTION

UNRWA's 30th anniversary

During the past few months, UNRWA has come to the attention of large audiences in many parts of the world through newspapers, radio and television and the work of many voluntary agencies. Articles in Arabic, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese and Swedish have told UNRWA's story and the story of Palestine refugees. The following excerpts and the headlines on the cover of this issue of "Palestine Refugees Today" illustrate some of the coverage received this year. In addition, voluntary agencies and United Nations Associations in France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States and many other countries have distributed information on UNRWA and organized seminars and displays.

UNRWA cash problems threaten to close Palestinian schools

Despite its difficulties, UNRWA will probably manage to struggle on somehow. But unless its funding is radically revised, it seems inevitable that the standard of its services and buildings will continue to decline. Meanwhile, the educational future of thousands of children in Jordan and Syria hangs in the balance.

—*Middle East Economic Digest* (London), 25 April 1980

Palestine—the fight for health

For 30 years the United Nations Relief and Works Agency has been at

the centre of providing health care for Palestine refugees. Each year the work grows while conditions worsen and money runs out... If UNRWA ceases to operate, it is difficult to see how the resulting gap can be filled. Meanwhile 1.8 million people are managing to cling to a very slippery lifeline.

—*Middle East Health* (London), May 1980

UNRWA's 3-month countdown

More than 1.5 million Palestinian refugees could be affected by cutbacks in a United Nations welfare programme caused by insufficient contributions from donor nations... The shortage of funds is not only hitting UNRWA's education system but is increasingly affecting its health and sanitation services.

—*Monday Morning* (Beirut), 23 June 1980

Grâce à l'O.N.U. Les Palestiniens: le peuple arabe le plus intellectuel

An anniversary has passed almost unnoticed but it probably is only of symbolic value—the anniversary of UNRWA... 30 years ago this month... If the Palestinians are being heard today, they owe some of it to UNRWA... The result (of UNRWA/UNESCO education): the Palestinians, almost 75 per cent rural peasants in 1948, have become the most intellectual of Arab peo-

ples. Today, 11 per cent of the Arab graduates are Palestinians although they make up only two per cent of the Arab nation.

—*Le Figaro* (Paris), 30 May 1980

PLIGHT OF REFUGEES: from bad to worse

For little more than 26 cents a day per registered refugee, UNRWA has been able to provide essential education, health and relief services for Palestinian refugees. But the Agency has now reached the point where it needs substantially more from donor countries if it is to maintain services... The current three-year mandate of the Agency is due to expire in 12 months. When the Agency's mandate is considered for renewal at the UN General Assembly this year, member nations will have to recognize they must do more than give verbal support to the life-saving work of the Agency. They will have to back it with dollars.

—*Canadian Churchman* (Toronto), June 1980

Auf Beistand angewiesen

It has been 30 years since UNRWA officially started its work. Although UNRWA has not been able to solve the problems of the world, it has at least been able to help alleviate the burning Palestine conflict.

—*Berner Zeitung* (Bern, Switzerland), 5 May 1980

It's a great accomplishment by anyone's standards. Located on 4.5 dunums (just over an acre) of land donated by the Municipality of Amman, Nazzal Community Centre has touched the lives of more than 400 families.

Just three years ago, students in the Social Development and Organisation course at the University of Jordan were taken out of the classroom into the community by their professor, Dr. Sari Naser, Head of the Sociology Department, a Palestine refugee now living in Jordan. Dr. Naser had taught a course in the theory of development through social change for a number of semesters, each time feeling that the knowledge gained by his students was definitely insufficient.

His first step was to help the students identify social problems in their own society and then to help them work out solutions. An earlier exercise had identified a lack of bus shelters in Jordan. As a result, in 1974, his students built some shelters near the University and the idea slowly caught on with local authorities. Within a few months, shelters had spread over Amman and then to towns and cities outside the capital.

In April 1977, his class identified a serious problem. There was nowhere in the city for children to play. The establishment of a community centre and playground might persuade authorities of the acute need and would also serve as an example for others to follow.

The first question was the location. The students pinpointed several poor and overcrowded neighbourhoods. Then student committees set to work simultaneously approaching the municipal government for a donation of land and attempting to raise funds or locate donations in kind.

When it became clear that Hai Nazzal (Hai meaning neighbourhood) was the only possible site, the students took it on themselves to initiate the project by beginning to set up a fence around the land in question.

Mainly refugees

However, the battle had just begun. The community, comprised mainly of 1948 Palestine refugees and several hundred refugees displaced

by the 1967 Arab-Israeli hostilities, did not like the intrusion.

On several occasions the students were on the verge of giving up only to rally as soon as Dr. Naser put their problems into perspective. They were setting a precedent in their society by showing that the individual was capable of and should be doing things on his own rather than waiting for UNRWA or others to help.

Another big problem was money. The students approached many individuals and firms in hopes of soliciting aid. Again and again the door was closed in their faces.

Constant pep talks from Dr. Naser kept the students going. Some eventually received promises of help while others continued building

the fence, which was considered a must before anything could be done on the land.

Located in the heart of the community it was to serve, the Centre and the students who struggled to give it life became the targets of obstruction and abuse.

Dr. Naser spent 10 hours a day with his students helping them to understand the situation, helping them to know how to react, helping them to understand that giving up would mean they had failed the very society they were striving to help. They kept at it for three months.

Their perseverance paid off when the first children came to look, and then to help. Not long after, their mothers appeared, bringing drinking water with them. They were

An impos



curious to know why the young people had stuck it out. Soon they began to volunteer ... holes were dug, cement bags were carried and the real construction began.

The first volunteers spread the word: the fee for joining the Centre was work, either at the Centre or in the community.

Transformation

Within days the plot of land was transformed from the community garbage dump into a clean, attractive and safe place for children to play.

Now in 1980, the Centre complex includes an administration building, the play area and an outdoor basketball court. A prefab building donated two years ago houses liter-

acy classes and vocational training courses for women. A concrete building, for which materials were donated but the community erected, is used as an auditorium and a library.

Dr. Naser has devoted a large part of each day these past three years to the project. "I told the students with each step they took that we had accomplished the possible; now we were doing the impossible. We supervised construction and collected materials and were joined by community volunteers. Today it could not be duplicated for less than 50,000 Jordanian dinars (\$170,000) if materials and labour had to be paid for. We are proud of what we were able to create but the pressures we experienced be-

cause we were instigating social change were truly overwhelming."

Battles won

"From the beginning, I had in mind a centre to cater to the needs of the child, the community and society. We took it in stages because I never dared tell the students of my full dream," Dr. Naser said recently.

"This proved successful by allowing them to cope with each situation as they came to it."

Today the Centre is flourishing with activities for everyone. Its main aim still is to cater to children. Later the activities were expanded to include mothers in an attempt to bring about change through the household approach. The ultimate aim is to co-ordinate the work of the Centre, the home and the community.

Trying for a school

The Centre is attempting to help the community develop in other ways. For example, with only one UNRWA elementary school in the area which accommodates some 2,000 boys by working two shifts a day, parents have spent the last six years asking for a girl's school. The long trip by public transport which the girls must take to a Government school means that many of the girls are kept home, especially in the winter.

The one Government school in Hail Nazzal for girls of elementary age is overcrowded with an enrolment of 2,200. This year it turned away 180 girls.

UNRWA has no budget for building new schools in this area and the Government is in the same position. "We are trying to organise a campaign which will bring results. Something must be done, even if we have to do it," says Miss Vera Halaseh, the Centre's first director who graduated from Jordan University with a sociology degree in 1979.

She admits that some people have yet to accept the Centre. Still, it has been successful mainly because of the involvement of community volunteers at an early stage. "It is theirs. Otherwise it could never have been. Most people respect the Centre, especially those who work in it."

Visible dream



Keeping traditions alive

Damascus Rose, Tent of the Sultan, Tree of Life, Feathers... names of romance and of a centuries-old culture. Some names, in fact, of the hundreds of designs which make up traditional Palestinian embroidery.

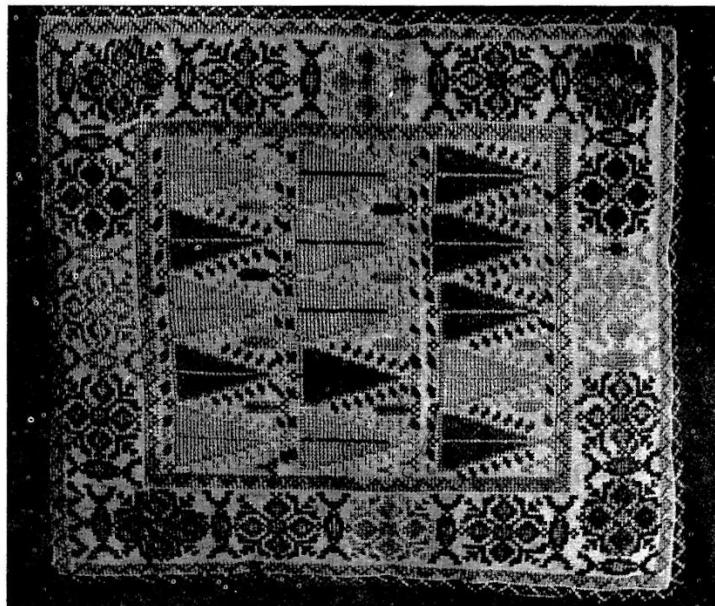
According to tradition, so the Association for the Development of Palestinian Camps in Lebanon says: "When a girl becomes 13 her parents buy her a hen. She sells the eggs to buy threads to embroider her wedding gown". Every Palestinian village bride thus made an extensive trousseau for herself, its items covered with fine embroidery.

This traditional life was broken up for the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian villagers who fled their country in the fighting of 1948-49, and again in 1967. But the Association — called by its many friends simply the 'Inaash' (Development) — started in 1968 to draw together the threads of the old embroidery skills which remained among the women of the refugee camps in Lebanon, of which there are now 13.

Today, the Inaash's production has grown enormously, a far cry from the early years when sometimes work had to stop for a month until the cash started flowing again. Now, women and girls coming to the three Inaash centres produce about 75 intricate and colourful cushion-covers each week, with the embroiderers netting nearly \$20 for each cover worked.

Work done at home

These women, around 1,000 of them in all, work at home in their own time, having already made something for Inaash to show that their work is of a good standard. Materials are distributed weekly from the three centres, having been made up into kits at Inaash headquarters at Shatila camp, in Beirut. (Here a boisterous nursery-school, another Inaash project,



sends the voices of 100 children chattering into the embroidery workshop).

Chief of design at Shatila is Mrs. Sirene Shahid, who works with a team of helpers matching patterns and colours to give the cushion-covers their distinctive style. "Giving new spirit to old designs," as the (male) manager of the headquarters complex explains.

Mrs. Shahid works from a thick swatch of samples, handstitched on silk to record all the designs she picks out from her own and other collections of traditional dresses. The design team will handle individual commissions for the traditional or updated versions of embroidered dresses, but the main thrust of its work is to enrich the range of cushion covers which have proved to be far and away the best sellers, finding an especially appreciative market in the Arab states of the Gulf.

The work is intricate, worked either on fine canvas or straight onto silk, almost completely covering the 40

centimetres (16 inches) square of their standards cushion-size. The canvas model retails in Lebanon for around \$55, the silk model for about \$65. But still, the organisers of the embroidery project report, the market is crying out for more.

Elsewhere other groups are trying out different approaches to keep the art of Palestinian embroidery alive and profitable. One of these is the Nejdeh (Palestinian Aid) Association, also headquartered in Beirut, which has introduced various innovations to bring the traditional designs to a wider market. It has branches in Europe and America as well as in the Arab world.

The Nejdeh finds that the traditional fine embroidery is generally too expensive for western tastes, as well as being ill-suited to western needs.

Design innovation

One radical innovation they have made has been to "blow up" the

traditional designs, until just one single motif could cover an item such as a wall-hanging or a large handbag made out of rough, gaily coloured hessian. Thus a brick-coloured wall-hanging would sport just a single 'Tree of Life', or a green cushion just a single, enormous 'Damascus Rose'.

This method may lack some of the delicacy of traditional Palestinian embroidery. But Miss May Aboud of the Nejdeh points out that by keeping prices to a minimum they have been able to open up vast new markets for the Palestinian designs. The Nejdeh's range of cushion covers retails for between \$ 6 and \$ 17, and with prices like these the Nejdeh was able to report that in 1979 its major markets (after local Lebanon) were Italy, the USA and Switzerland.

The Nejdeh has workshops at four different camps throughout Lebanon, each one with about 30 full-time workers totally dependent on the continuing flow of work. So the pressure to find markets is great.

Miss Aboud says that this is pushing the Nejdeh in two main directions in its designs. On the one hand they are developing more finely worked decorative items (though she stresses they do not want to duplicate the work of the Inaash exactly). On the other they are developing the sewing side of the work to produce women's and especially children's clothes involving relatively little embroidery and a lot of ordinary tailoring. With a simple cotton dress featuring two embroidered camels on the yoke retailing for around \$ 8, they find they are competitive in the children's clothing market, and now they are working on an order for 100 dresses for a Lebanese wholesaler.

This may seem a long way away from the village bride, quietly stitching to prepare her trousseau. But the continuity of skills and designs remains. As one expert on Palestinian embroidery commented, "The variety of designs is like a complete language." If so, it speaks of hope for the future, for the thousands of women now able, through their traditional skills, to contribute to the family budget.

Palestine Portraits

Aishe Ahmed el-Azzi

In her western dress, Aishe Ahmed el-Azzi could belong anywhere. But she lives in New Amman Camp, one of two large Palestine refugee camps located within the city limits of Amman, the capital of Jordan. Just months before she was born, her family was uprooted by the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

"Life has always been difficult for us. It is run, run, run for a loaf of bread. My husband has been in east Jordan since 1957 and he does whatever work he can find. I cannot go out to work because I have no one to look after my young children. I feel their formative years are now and my role is to be with them, to teach them and to guide them," explains Aishe.

A trained seamstress, Aishe attended UNRWA elementary and lower secondary schools in Hebron in the now occupied West Bank, completing her secondary education at a Jordan Government school. After passing the Tawjiji (Secondary General Education Certificate) in 1968, she stayed at home for two years because of the upheavals resulting from the 1967 war and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank.

In 1970 she took a six-month course at a nearby UNRWA Sewing Centre. "This course was invaluable and opened the door to a position at the Beni Na'im Charitable Society Centre where I worked for four years," Aishe recalls. "Then in 1976 I married my cousin, who had been left with two young daughters to rear on his own. This is what brought me to Amman.

"When I was living in Hebron, I was closer to our village of Ajour, located in that part of the Hebron area which was taken in the creation of Israel. My father was killed in the 1948 war and my mother who was pregnant—with me—made her way with relatives and other villagers to Hebron. She had my two older brothers and sister in tow; I do not know how she made it."

Aishe's childhood was like that of any other refugee child in that area, "so near and yet so far from our family home . . . We somehow went on living although heartache and sadness seemed to permeate every day of our lives. Then coming to Amman in 1976 made my heart even heavier because it meant removing myself from my loved ones as well as the area of my family home."

Within the el-Azzi courtyard, encircled by a cement wall, are three small rooms built independently of one another. "We have to keep the girls—Muntaha, aged 10 years, Misha'al, 12 years old, and Ahlan, 1½ years old—inside the courtyard because there is no place for them to play in New Amman Camp. The older girls go to school and then come straight home," Aishe says. "I try to amuse them and to teach them to cook and do housework by giving them light chores to fill their time. We can do no more for them. But we dream of the day they will be able to romp through the fields of our family village in Palestine."

Abdullah Iadeh Samhadaneh

Children are the hope of the future. That is the firm belief of Abdullah Iadeh Samhadaneh, an UNRWA mathematics supervisor since 1976 in the Amman, Jordan area.

Each time he sees the children lined up in the schoolyard before the day's classes begin, he says, "I feel a pride in our Palestinian youth and a satisfaction in the fact that the education they are receiving will help us raise our standard of living and strengthen our future as a people." For this reason, Abdullah is concerned about the threat of closing parts of UNRWA's school system because of money shortage.

A 1976 graduate of Bir Zeit University in the Israeli-occupied West

Bank, Abdullah received his master's degree in mathematics from the University of Jordan this year. As an UNRWA supervisor, he visits 65 UNRWA elementary and preparatory schools regularly and oversees the work of some 150 teachers.

"I want to help our young people," says Abdullah, "by better preparing them for what lies ahead. Education is all-important. The responsibilities awaiting them are greater than those facing the children of most nations ... because these young Palestinians are today homeless."

The seventh of 13 living children, Abdullah comments on the size of families among Palestinians: "Many outside of the Arab world look at the large size of our families and rightfully say that this has aggravated our problems as refugees. Westerners think that having large families means we should automatically be poor ... that large families and poverty go hand and hand. However, they should realise that not too long ago we lived off the land and that infant mortality was also high," Abdullah further explains. "I, for one, know that our life style has changed, but I cannot forget that my father as a villager was tied to his land and needed children to help produce the family livelihood. And that was only one short generation ago." Married in 1973, Abdullah is the father of three sons and one daughter.

Abdullah's father, a wheat and vegetable farmer on the family's 150 dunums (35 hectares, 84 acres) of land outside Beersheba, moved his wife and young children to Rafah in south Gaza in early 1949 as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. There Abdullah was born in September 1950.

Even though he has not been able to live on the land of his fathers, Abdullah is quick to explain that this does not mean he is not still tied to it. "A homeland travels in the mind and heart of the person himself. It is a part of him. This is what we call the concept of *watan*, a patriotism and love for our homeland no matter where we may be. If the present situation extends beyond my lifetime, I am sure that my children will teach their children about the land of their fathers."

UNRWA A/V production:

Through the eyes of IBRAHIM

About a third of the letters received by the UNRWA Public Information Division come from students or teachers wanting more information on Palestine refugees and some ask how they can correspond with young Palestinians, an exchange that is enriching for all concerned.

This is why an UNRWA photographer had an idea of how to respond to such requests. It was to look at the life of Palestine refugees through the eyes of one young refugee. So photographer Munir Nasr spent 10 days in a refugee camp with camera, tape recorder and notebook. From dawn until dusk he shared the life of Ibrahim Shatarat, 12, and his family.

Ibrahim was born in Marka camp, Jordan, during the winter after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, which caused the second move of his family in 20 years. Thousands of refugees had the same fate.

Through the words and pictures collected by Munir Nasr, Ibrahim shows his daily life, his school and teachers,

his home and family, his

games and his friends. Through this we see the way of life in a refugee camp.

Ibrahim tells us what is important to him in life. Young westerners, often bored with school, may be surprised to hear of his thirst for knowledge and his attachment to his books and school. For him, the hope of improving his life depends to a great degree on his success at school.

But his hopes could have a setback. The school he attends has no frills and is over-crowded and there is a threat that it may be closed as UNRWA's deficit continues to climb.

Although Ibrahim is only 12 and this slide/tape production is addressed to a school audience, it can also be used by other groups as an introduction to a discussion on Palestine refugees.

The programme lasts 10 minutes and can be used on any kind of 35 mm slide projector, with or without a cassette tape recorder. Also included are teaching notes on Ibrahim's family, Marka camp and the Kingdom of Jordan where he lives, on Palestine refugees in general and on UNRWA.

The slide/tape production (ST 1003) can be borrowed free of charge or purchased (cost — \$ 45) by writing to any of the addresses on the following page.



UNRWA Publications

GENERAL

UNRWA: Basic Facts (PL 1006)
Printed Leaflet (English, French, German)

After 30 Years...UNRWA's 30th anniversary
(PL 1008)
Printed Leaflet (English, French, German, Arabic)

Definitions and Statistics
Summary of UNRWA data (English and Arabic)

Map of UNRWA's area of operations
with refugee location data (English, Arabic)

UNRWA: The facts (S.T.1)
Agency financial data (English, French, German)

Survey (PB 1002)
Brochure of facts and figures (English, French, German and Arabic).

PROGRAMME LEAFLETS

Education (PL 2002—English, French, German)

Vocational Training (PL 2001—English, French, German)

Health (PL 3001—English, French, German)

Relief (PL 4001—English, French, German)

Palestine Refugees in Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. A series of five leaflets on each field of operation (English).

POSTERS

UNRWA and Children
A set of three posters on Palestine refugee children. Black and white. Titles in English, French, German.

UNRWA: Born in 1950...
Marking UNRWA's 30th anniversary. Titles in English, French, German.

After 30 years...

Black and white poster to mark UNRWA's 30th anniversary. Titles in English, French, German or Arabic.

AUDIO-VISUAL PRODUCTIONS

Picture Set
12 black and white photographs (18 x 24 cm) for display use. Captions in English, French, German and Arabic.

Slide/Tape Shows

ST 1002: A seven-minute slide/tape production showing UNRWA's activities with Palestine refugees. Commentary in English, French, German or Arabic.

My Name is Fadwa

A 15-minute, 16 mm colour film on a deaf Palestine refugee child. Available for loan or purchase in English, French, German or Italian.

My Father's Land

A half-hour, 16 mm colour film on the Gaza blind school for Palestine refugee children. Available for purchase or loan in English, French or German.

CONTACT

UNRWA Headquarters (Vienna)
Vienna International Centre
P.O. Box 700
1400 Vienna, Austria

UNRWA Headquarters (Amman)
P.O. Box 484
Amman, Jordan

UNRWA Liaison Office
Room 937
United Nations Headquarters
New York, New York 10017
U.S.A.

UNRWA Liaison Office
2, Avenue Dar El-Shifa
P.O. Box 277
Cairo, Egypt