

PROJECTS APPROVED AND IMPLEMENTED

With respect to my letter which appeared in the last ANERA Newsletter (Number 55, July-September, 1981), I am pleased to report that a short time ago the Israeli Military Occupation Authority approved most of our projects/grants funded by our individual and corporate donors. ANERA and the relevant West Bank and Gaza Strip organizations have now implemented them. We at ANERA are naturally pleased with this progress and wish to thank those involved. In addition, we wish to express our gratitude to all the ANERA supporters who expressed their concern by letter and telephone over the long delay in the approval process.

Thanking you again for your support,

Peter Gubser
President

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF DISABLED PERSONS

To be physically or mentally handicapped in any society is a hardship; to be Palestinian and handicapped is a double disability. In addition to the daily problems of life in a refugee camp or under military occupation, the victim and his family must deal with the special problems involved in the care, education and rehabilitation of a person with unique needs.

Whether the cause is genetic or the result of an accident or war, a handicapped person requires some special attention all his or her life. The disability may be extreme, as in cases of severe mental retardation or total physical disability, requiring extensive treatment and care. However, many handicapped people—the blind, those suffering from the loss of limb, or the slightly mentally retarded—can lead full and productive lives with proper care and training.

In recognition of the United Nations' International Year of Disabled Persons, this Newsletter will describe briefly some of the work being done for the care of handicapped Palestinians.



UNRWA

While its main purpose is to provide basic necessities of life to Palestinian refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency undertakes a few services specifically for the disabled. Conditions in refugee camps offer disabled Palestinians little opportunity to become self-sufficient; often a severe financial strain is placed on their families. To help alleviate this problem, UNRWA distributes double rations of foodstuffs — flour, rice, cooking oil and sugar to such special hardship families. To a limited extent, medical rehabilitation is provided at a number of institutions. People suffering from chronic or degenerative diseases receive treatment at one of several specialized outpatient clinics. Certain hospitals are run for crippled children, providing rehabilitation therapy and medical services. Last year over 600 people were fitted with prosthetic devices.

Coinciding with the Year of Disabled Persons, UNRWA started a pilot community project in one of the camps in Jordan. The goal is to teach members of the community how they can best apply limited available resources to improve the quality of life for the physically and mentally disabled, giving them the opportunity to lead useful lives.

PALESTINE RED CRESCENT SOCIETY

Organized like the Red Cross, the Palestine Red Crescent Society functions in both a medical and humanitarian way. Because the difficult living and poor health conditions of most Palestinians are a major cause of disability, the Society created a department concerned solely with the care and rehabilitation of physically disabled Palestinians. It is the only Palestinian organization to have a comprehensive plan for the handicapped, integrating medical and social services at its two major facilities: the Rehabilitation Center at Haifa Hospital and the Ramleh Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Center, both in Lebanon.

The Ramleh Center is a modern, well-equipped hospital where patients undergo a complete rehabilitation process. After the initial medical treatment, rehabilitation begins using up-to-date techniques in exercise therapy combined with electro-, ultrasonic, heat or hydrotherapies. If necessary, a patient is also fitted with and trained to use a prosthetic device. The Center has its own workshop that makes items such as artificial limbs, crutches, polio splints and braces.

One of the most important aspects of the Center's rehabilita-

(Continued on back page)

REHABILITATION: A KEY TO THE FUTURE

FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED . . .

Although the largest single cause of disability among Palestinians is mental retardation, specialized care and rehabilitation programs are a relatively recent development and do not nearly meet the need. As in other societies, mental retardation has often been viewed with a mixture of shame and embarrassment. Parents have been reluctant to admit their children were retarded, frequently believing such a child was an 'act of God' or a punishment. As a result, in the past the mentally retarded have been neglected and ridiculed, or even abused.

Today, attitudes have changed and public awareness has increased greatly. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip there are now ten centers operating special programs for the mentally retarded. However, these programs are all small and face a chronic shortage of adequate facilities and trained personnel. In the entire West Bank, there is not a single qualified psychologist working with the mentally retarded. While each center only has room for between ten and sixty participants, many have waiting lists of hundreds of people. Over the years, ANERA has supported several of these societies running programs for the mentally retarded.

SUN DAY CARE CENTER

Currently serving 60 mildly to moderately retarded children between the ages of 6 and 14, the Sun Day Care Center is the only institute of its kind in Gaza. The staff is well-qualified, including a medical doctor, a psychologist, a social worker, 6 teachers and a vocational training instructor. In addition, a pediatrician and a psychiatrist volunteer their services. Set up much like a school, activities are varied during the 6 daily periods. Classes are kept small (usually 7-8 children), grouped according to age, educability and physical ability. Transportation to and from the Center is provided, as is breakfast and a hot lunch.

Training children to function is a way useful to themselves and to society, the Center focuses on the American Body and Self-Awareness program. Children are taught to recognize their bodies which increases their basic coordination. Games and arts and crafts courses are used to improve perception, memory and motor skills. As the children develop these skills, it becomes possible to teach them personal hygiene, table etiquette and simple tasks such as dressing themselves. Some children go on to learn to read, write and handle simple mathematics. Positive reinforcement (rewarding correct behavior and responses) is emphasized to maintain a child's enthusiasm throughout the program.

The arts and crafts courses serve a dual purpose. In addition to helping children to control and use their bodies, the courses are also teaching employable skills. Older boys learn carpentry and bamboo work in the Center's workshop; girls are trained in sewing, knitting and weaving. This vocational training is an important part in helping the mentally retarded become functional members of society.

The Sun Day Care Center also performs a vital role in community and parental awareness. Frequent home visits by the teachers, social worker and psychologist keep parents informed about their child's progress. These visits also help the psychologist evaluate a child's needs through observation of his behavior in a home environment. Bi-monthly talks are given at the Center on the Body and Self-Awareness program and the role of parental support.

This year, the Center has plans to expand its facilities to increase its enrollment and improve its services. ANERA has made grants to the Sun Day Care Center for several years and is especially pleased to announce that, inter alia, the Military Occupation Authority recently approved this year's somewhat larger grant to the Center.

PROGRAMS ON THE WEST BANK

The centers for the mentally retarded on the West Bank are quite varied in the size and scope of their programs. The oldest and largest is the al-Nahda Women's Association's Center for the Mentally Retarded. Located in Ramallah, it provides proper care and education for 48 people, aged 5-20. Again, emphasis is placed on training children to allow them to lead useful lives. Al-Nahda's program includes teaching children to care for themselves as well as to perform simple household tasks. This training helps the child in his home life by reducing the extra care required of his mother and family. A large part of al-Nahda's program is devoted to vocational training. Students participate in courses teaching pottery, basket weaving and home economics.

Another institute is run by the Bethlehem Arab Women's Union. Their program is somewhat different as they only accept trainable (slightly mentally retarded) children. Almost all the 20 students, aged 9-13, eventually learn to read and write. ANERA has made grants to this Women's Union for the last several years to support this and other worthwhile programs.

Lastly, the Red Crescent Societies of Hebron, Ramallah and Nablus have small, comprehensive care programs for mentally retarded children. In addition to receiving necessary care and training in basic motor skills, the children are educated to their level of ability.



Dagny Svien





Programs to help people overcome other types of disabilities are also extremely limited and do not have adequate resources to meet the need.

FOR THE DEAF . . .

The Institute Effeta in Bethlehem is the only organization on the West Bank specializing in the rehabilitation of deaf children. The Institute's program includes kindergarten and six years of elementary school education. The students are first trained to lip read. As they progress, they are taught to speak, read and write with the aid of modern equipment. Teachers are well trained in special techniques for the instruction of the deaf.

After finishing at the Institute Effeta, most boys go on to continue their education or receive vocational training at the Salesian Technical School. Many girls also enter vocational training programs teaching knitting and sewing.

The Institute Effeta's success rate is high. However, it can accept less than 100 students at a time. The need for new and expanded facilities is great. In the past, ANERA has provided grants to the Institute for the purchase of special audio equipment. (ANERA also provides funds for the general support of the Salesian Technical School.)

FOR THE BLIND . . .

The only medical facility in the Occupied Territories for the treatment of eye diseases and eye surgery is St. John Ophthalmic Hospital in Jerusalem. Over 6,000 operations are performed annually, restoring sight or preventing blindness for many people with severe and complex eye problems. However, many debilitating eye diseases are a direct result of poor health and sanitation conditions; with proper treatment they can be cured and/or prevented fairly quickly and easily. St. John's maintains a large out-patient clinic where treatment of such cases is very effective. As such, the hospital performs a vital service for the general health of Palestinians, as well as those with sight impairments. ANERA has helped the hospital purchase equipment

and helped fund an ophthalmic nursing training course, which served to improve the quality of care for the patients and to provide job opportunities for other young Palestinian men and women.

There are very few Palestinian programs for the training and rehabilitation of the blind. UNRWA, with the Pontifical Mission for Palestine, runs the Gaza Centre for the Blind. On the West Bank, the Friends of the Blind Society, with branches in Hebron, Nablus and Ramallah, operates similar, but much smaller schools. Children are taught to read Braille and receive a basic education as well as vocational training courses in suitable fields.

FOR CRIPPLED CHILDREN . . .

The two major facilities for physically disabled children are both located in Jerusalem. The Crippled Children's Home, part of the Four Homes of Mercy, cares for more than 20 severely and permanently disabled children. At the Home, they are assured of food, shelter and a safe, sound environment. Due to the severity of their disability, however, generally only very limited rehabilitation is possible.

The Jerusalem Crippled Children Centre, however, functions as a home, a rehabilitation center and an out-patient clinic. The 45 residents, all under 14 years, participate in a combined rehabilitation/education program. On one hand, the patients undergo physiotherapy and training in the use of prosthetic devices, which are made at the Centre's own workshop. At the same time, they receive an elementary education at the Centre's school. Almost 500 other disabled children receive medical care and physiotherapy treatments on an out-patient basis.

The Centre currently has plans to start a Vocational Training and Occupational Therapy School for at least 30 teen-aged students. Such a program, combined with a basic scholastic education would make these people fully functional and self-supporting in two years.



tion program is its vocational training courses. Often when treatment requires a specific physical movement, that exercise will be applied to learning a useful trade; for example, a patient may learn to operate a sewing machine as part of his physiotherapy. Some of these people are even trained to work at the Center itself to assist in the treatment of other patients in accordance with their motto "the rehabilitated for the help and training of the newly injured." Emphasis is placed on using the rehabilitated in the care of disabled people because they have a greater understanding of the needs and worries of these patients. The Ramleh Center also provides psychological counseling throughout the rehabilitation period to help people adjust to their handicap and to prepare them to reenter society.

The Center at Haifa Hospital runs a similar, albeit much smaller

program. In addition, the Palestine Red Crescent Society operates a facility for the permanently disabled and provides material aid for the truly needy.

AS A WHOLE: The overall picture of care for handicapped Palestinians is bleak. Each individual organization is to be commended for its valuable work for people suffering from various disabilities. However, it just isn't enough; the number of disabled persons far exceeds the opportunities for special training, rehabilitation and even medical care. Lacking government-supported programs, the vast majority of these organizations are charitable societies and rely on private contributions to meet their costs. Funds are extremely scarce, making existing programs difficult to maintain while the need for new, larger facilities and qualified staff is ever-increasing.

ANERA wishes to recognize and express its gratitude to the following corporations and foundations. They, among others, have contributed generously to ANERA and helped make many humanitarian projects of aid possible.

Alia — The Royal Jordanian Airline ■ Amerada Hess Corporation ■ Ames Division, Miles Laboratories, Inc. ■ Arab Petroleum Investments Corporation ■ Arthur D. Little, Inc. ■ Ashland Oil International ■ CH2M Hill International ■ Eli Lilly and Company ■ Esso Mid-East and Africa, Inc. ■ Fluor Foundation ■ Ford Mid-East and Africa, Inc. ■ Foundation for Middle East Peace ■ George Frederick Jewett Foundation ■ Gulf Oil Foundation ■ Gulf & Western Industries ■ Lederle Laboratories ■ Longman Group Limited ■ Mead Johnson & Co. ■ Mobil Foundation, Inc. ■ NCR Corporation ■ NL Industries, Inc. ■ The Olayan Group of Companies ■ Princeton University Press ■ Riggs National Bank ■ Standard Oil Company of California ■ Texaco ■ Upjohn Company ■ Western Geophysical Company ■ Whittaker Corporation.

ANERA has received special gifts in memory of the following people.

Marie Swabini Barakat ■ Anna Christy ■ Lydia Farah ■ Nimeh Faris ■ Gertrude Lowbeer ■ Eleanor Mildon ■ John Szluk, Jr.

Enclosed is a special gift for ANERA's work for handicapped Palestinians.

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This issue of the ANERA Newsletter was written by Alison Kelly, ANERA Executive Assistant

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