

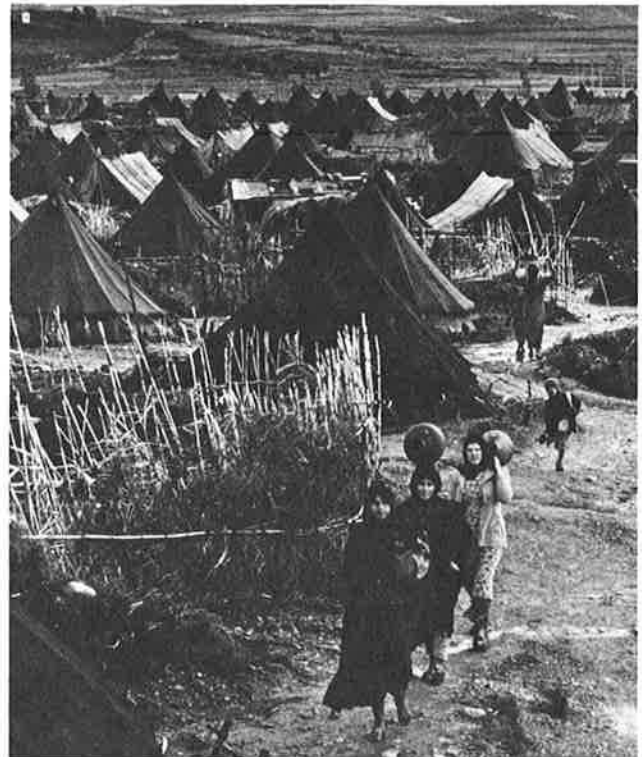
UNRWA — A COMMITMENT TO PALESTINIANS

UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1949 to provide assistance to Palestinians displaced in the war in 1948. Since that time, UNRWA has been shaped by the *changing needs of the refugees, political considerations, and a series of regional crises*. But through almost four decades, UNRWA has continued to provide vital relief, health and educational services to several generations of Palestinian refugees. For many of these refugees, the existence of UNRWA is a symbol of the international community's commitment to resolving the conflict that has determined their fate.

In 1950, the number of officially registered refugees was estimated at about one million. UNRWA now provides services to more than twice that number. UNRWA is headquartered in Vienna, with regional offices located in countries acting as 'hosts' to the Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. The agency also has offices in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Of the 1.3 million Palestinians living in these two areas, 700,000 are refugees who fled what is now Israel in 1948. At that time, the U.N. resolved "that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date..." and "that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return..." For the dispossessed, this resolution has been the legal touchstone of a faith that they may one day return to their homes.

Of the almost two million registered Palestine refugees served by UNRWA, nearly 750,000 live in camps throughout the region. The camps are controlled and policed by the host country, while UNRWA takes responsibility for them and offers services such as food distribution for the needy, youth activities centers, clinics, sanitation facilities, and education. Originally the refugees lived in tents, but during the 1950's these were replaced with more permanent shelters made of cement blocks or mud. Although the camps are cramped and have few modern amenities, they are a symbol to the refugees that their situation is not permanent.

Initially, UNRWA had a dual mission. One focus was a development program, primarily public works efforts and small self-help projects. This program was aimed at integrating the refugees into the life of the host countries, but it did not prove workable on a large scale. The more successful program of the agency was to provide relief to those individuals who had been registered as Palestine refugees. Palestinians who qualified as refugees were "those people or their descendants whose normal residence was Palestine for a minimum of two years preceding



Nahr-el-Bared camp, near Tripoli, Lebanon in 1952. The tents were later replaced by concrete huts.

the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948 and who, as a result, had lost both their homes and their means of livelihood." At first, UNRWA provided the refugees with a basic food ration, assisted in construction of shelter for those without other alternatives, and provided some general social welfare services. Over the years the nature of UNRWA's services has changed as a speedy resolution to the refugees' situation was not forthcoming.

Currently UNRWA operates three main programs — relief, health, and education. Relief has become the smallest area of operation for the agency. Due to financial pressures, the basic ration was withdrawn in 1982 in all fields except Lebanon. However, UNRWA continues to provide aid to special hardship cases, usually widows or families with no male of working age. These people receive food, clothing and blankets, occasional small cash grants, and priority for placement in vocational training programs. UNRWA also provides special services to the disabled and physically handicapped. In Lebanon, the Israeli invasion of



UNRWA's mother-child health care program (MCH) meets health needs in the first months of a new life.

1982 left many Palestinians homeless and destitute. UNRWA has provided relief in increasingly difficult circumstances, including emergency food rations until March 1985. And despite ongoing turmoil, UNRWA has continued to operate education and health programs for the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon.

UNRWA is the major provider of health services to the Palestine refugees. The agency provides both curative and preventive medical and dental care, as well as rehabilitation services. These services are provided free of charge, a boon to refugees at a time when worsening economic conditions have left them with less money for private doctors. UNRWA provides out-patient treatment and consultations at 124 health centers and 30 dental clinics. Hospitalization is subsidized by the agency at government or private hospitals, a service which has become progressively more expensive due to rising costs and inflation.

Preventive health care is a major concern of UNRWA, and the agency has a number of laudable programs designed to promote general good health among the refugees. UNRWA's maternal and child health care program (MCH) covers a range of services from pre-natal to early childhood health measures. Children participating in MCH are immunized against communicable diseases, and UNRWA also teaches basic personal and food hygiene to the children in schools and clinics. To insure proper nutrition, basic to good health, UNRWA monitors the refugee population, with special emphasis on the most vulnerable groups — infants and young children, pregnant and nursing women, and the destitute. The agency provides lunches and extra rations to needy individuals at supplementary feeding stations. UNRWA treats children suffering from diarrheal diseases with oral rehydration therapy, (ORT), an inexpensive and effective treatment that alleviates dehydration. UNRWA was a pioneer in developing ORT, a health technology now being used throughout the Third World for saving children's lives.

UNRWA works to control outbreaks of disease in the refugee camps by improving the physical environment through community health measures. The absence of epidemics among the camps' populations testifies to the successful efforts of health workers. However, a chronic lack of financial resources makes it difficult to make much-needed improvements and additions in sanitation systems.

Education is decidedly the most important of UNRWA's programs for the refugees. Deprived of their land, education has become a major asset for the refugees. With technical and professional advice from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNRWA operates elementary and preparatory schools through the ninth grade (and through the tenth in Lebanon). The curricula of these schools are the same as those of the schools in the host countries (Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, and Jordan and Egypt in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.) Palestinian students are thus able to complete high school education in host country schools. Holding locally honored education certificates also helps the refugees obtain

Together with UNRWA, ANERA is implementing a sewage project for clean pathways and a sanitation project for cleaner schools in refugee camps in Gaza. Your donations will help create a better environment in which refugee children can play and learn.

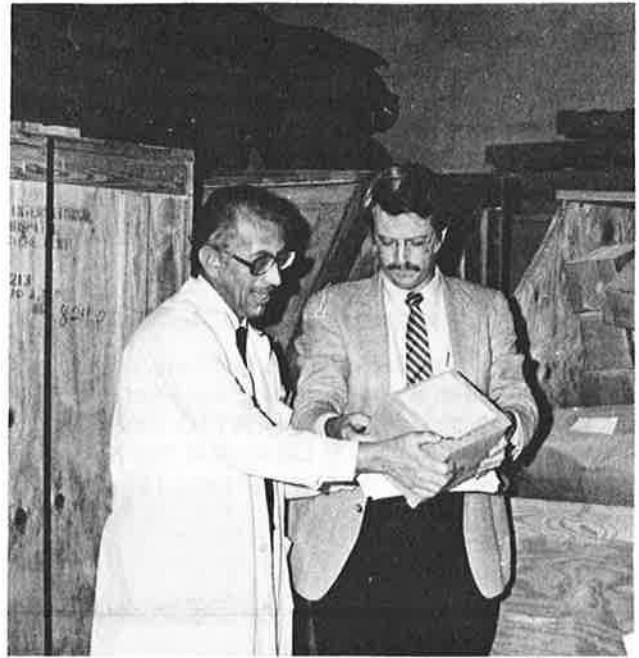


Sports, cultural events, and other youth activities are an important part of daily camp life.

employment in the host countries. UNRWA also provides a limited number of university scholarships to qualified students.

UNRWA currently operates seven vocational training centers which offer courses in skilled trades, such as mechanics, carpentry and welding to almost 4000 refugees each year. With financing from OPEC, UNRWA has added courses for electronics technicians, dental hygienists and medical secretaries, skills in demand in the Middle East job market. In cooperation with UNESCO, UNRWA has also developed programs for pre-service and in-service teacher training. These programs have become models for teacher training and upgrading for many Arab countries. The result of all of these measures has been the emergence of a well-educated, highly motivated refugee population. From grade school through university study, education is UNRWA's most influential program, offering Palestinian refugee children their best hope for self-sufficiency in the future.

But operation of this vital program is hampered by an ongoing lack of funds. Like other U.N. agencies, the bulk of UNRWA's funding comes from the voluntary contributions of U.N. member nations, and the contributions frequently are not sufficient to cover UNRWA's most basic expenses. In recent years financial constraints have become severe. In order to continue to provide basic services and education to an increasing number of refugees, the agency has had to cut costs through austerity measures. Staff salary increases have been frozen; empty posts remain unfilled. Construction and repair of buildings, especially schools, has been postponed. The lack of available classroom space has meant that UNRWA has had to run two shifts each day to accommodate all of the refugee students. With



UNRWA Field Pharmacist/West Bank Samir Khaldi and ANERA President Peter Gubser check medical supplies donated to UNRWA by ANERA.

a growing school-age population, in many areas UNRWA has had to resort to triple shifting.

An increasing refugee population, combined with more limited job opportunities, make the refugees more dependent on UNRWA's services at a time when the agency's funds are becoming more strained. One major reason UNRWA has difficulty obtaining funding is the nature of the agency's mandate. From the outset, the U.N. member nations have hoped that a political solution could be found, and the Palestine refugees would be either resettled or repatriated. UNRWA has been given only temporary mandates since 1950, because the U.N. feels that to make the agency permanent would be to extinguish the hope of the Palestinians that a just peace will eventually be achieved. As long as there are Palestine refugees, UNRWA will exist, but without sufficient funding it will be increasingly difficult for the agency to provide for the basic needs of the refugees.

ANERA assists UNRWA with cash and in-kind grants. In 1984 ANERA provided UNRWA with nearly a half million dollars worth of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies for refugee relief in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Lebanon. In support of UNRWA's education efforts, ANERA has continually given funds for scholarships in teaching, carpentry, mechanics, welding and business education. During the war in Lebanon, ANERA donated generators for clinics operating in south Lebanon. Working together in this fashion, ANERA and UNRWA are better able to meet the needs of the Palestine refugees.

Despite financial difficulties and political crises, UNRWA has continued to serve the refugees for over thirty-five years. But the agency's influence extends beyond its impact on their daily lives. To the Palestine refugees, the very existence of the agency assures them that their plight has not been forgotten by the international community. UNRWA remains a symbol of the promise that they may one day return home.



UNRWA's vocational training programs enable Palestine refugees to learn valuable skills in demand in the Middle East labor market.

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American University of Beirut ■ the marriage of Ramon Barreto and Skylar Switzer ■ Paul and Ellice Bezreh ■ Chatilla and Sabra ■ Jesus Christ ■ the Christians and Moslems of all Middle East countries ■ Dr. John H. Davis and AMER ■ a forgotten people ■ the Joseph Gazdak family ■ in gratitude for God's goodnesas and gifts ■ Mr. and Mrs. D. L. Hendry ■ the injured children ■ the Khoury family ■ Lebanon ■ Frank Maria ■ Alex Odeh ■ Palestinian family near the Kibbutz "Tel Josef" ■ Bari Prescott ■ the fiftieth wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Rayko ■ refugees of all faiths ■ Ralph Voelker ■ the work of ANERA.

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