

IN THE RED CROSS WORLD

RED CROSS WELFARE SERVICES

An invitation to look into the future, drew specialists in Red Cross welfare services of 22 National Societies to a holiday isle near Stockholm. Here, during the IVth Red Cross International Seminar on Welfare Service, they met to predict "the prospective role of the Red Cross welfare service in a rapidly-changing world". Within the main theme of the seminar, they took a closer look at contemporary approaches to the elderly, the mentally, physically and socially handicapped and the recruitment of volunteers. Several visits were organised to institutions representing the newest initiatives in Sweden in these fields.

At the close of the Seminar participants' main requests were long-term ones: for ad hoc working groups, outlines of specialised courses and a guide for the training of those in charge of welfare services.

The Seminar, held 28 May-4th June, was organised jointly by the Swedish Red Cross and the League.

Jordan

The League of Red Cross Societies has published in its review Panorama some information collected by its delegate in Jordan, Mr. El-Kechai, Vice-President of the Algerian Red Crescent, who in this capacity has had considerable experience of these relief operations.

Tens of thousands of refugees streamed across the Jordan River and settled on the vast stretches of the East Bank, following the recent events.

Except in the Jordan Valley itself, where the greenery and crops indicate the presence of water, most of the land on which the camps

for refugees and displaced persons have been set up is on a plateau several hundred feet above sea level. Devoid of vegetation, the landscape is parched and bare and yellow-ochre in colour. Dust, whipped by the wind into swirling clouds is everywhere. During the day the heat is stifling but the nights are cool.

Gradually all the camps, improvised under extremely difficult material conditions, especially concerning sanitation, are becoming better organised. Water is a key problem and in each one throughout the day innumerable women and children can be seen going to and fro, armed with all kinds of containers, to collect the precious fluid.

On 10 August, the League of Red Cross Societies, in close co-operation with the Jordanian Red Crescent, assumed responsibility for operating nine milk stations for a large number of refugees and displaced persons. In reality these stations have been set up in six camps since two stations had to be installed in three of the camps, in view of the population numbers.

The first milk distribution took place on 13 July at Souf, a camp of 13,000 people to the north of Amman, the Jordanian capital. Biscuits, tinned goods, fruit juice and soap were distributed with the milk. This station has been in operation ever since its opening, as has the station opened 29 July in the camp of Karak (5,000 people), in the south near the Dead Sea.

One after the other, milk stations opened on 5 August in the camps of El Karameh and of Shune, near the Jordan, sheltering 8,000 and 8,500 refugees. In these camps used clothing was handed out during the distributions to particularly needy families. On 6 August an "annex" of the Jordanian Red Crescent was set up in the camp of Wadi-Dhlel (6,700 people) for supplementary distributions of condensed milk and tinned goods.

Finally, on 9 August, milk stations were opened in the camps of Wadi Elyabess and Mâadhi, also situated on the eastern bank of the Jordan. At present the two camps have populations of 8,500 and 8,000 inhabitants but these figures will almost certainly increase as a result of their geographical situation. Many of the refugees want to be near the present frontier of the Jordan, to be on hand for the repatriation to the West Bank.

In all a total of 12,000 to 15,000 milk rations is being distributed daily, in priority to children aged between four to sixteen years.

In each case distributions are held between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. the best time of the day for many reasons—because it avoids the heat of the day and because immediately after the milk distributions the handing out of food rations by the camp authorities begins, and often lasts well into the afternoon. Obviously if the first clients are served at 6 a.m. the Red Crescent teams have to start work much earlier to prepare the milk under difficult conditions, principally the lack of light and the need to ensure a certain standard of hygiene.

Thanks to one or two specialists, a number of helpers have been trained in a very short period in the preparation and distribution of the milk. In general each station occupies four to five people, preparing and serving, who have been selected by the camp authorities from among the most energetic and conscientious young men.

In all the camps except one the main problem encountered in the preparation of the milk has been the water supply. Small donkeys are hired to ensure the daily transport of this country's most precious commodity.

The basic food supply for all refugees and displaced persons in the camps is provided by the Jordanian government, the UNRWA, the Save the Children Fund and, at Zizia, by the Red Lion and Sun Society which has taken on the entire responsibility. In general the distributions consist mostly of bread rations, plus, in some camps, rice, potatoes or tinned goods. There is no need to stress how important the Red Crescent—Red Cross milk rations are for the children and young people.

These nine milk stations are supplied by the League directly from its 16 depots in Amman; each one is specialised in a particular kind of supplies or foodstuffs—three places are reserved for instance for stocks of skimmed milk.

The enormous quantities of supplies sent to Jordan from all parts of the world—or at least the Red Cross/Red Crescent gifts—called for a corresponding amount of work in sorting, classifying and listing. It faced League and Red Crescent staff with a tough job lasting several weeks. Thanks to the personnel and volunteers of the Jordanian National Society a veritable and much needed administrative service was set up.