

# *World Refugee Year*

**W**ORLD Refugee Year, which began on June 28, 1959, and ended on June 30, 1960, was conceived by a group of citizens in the United Kingdom, who persuaded their Government to sponsor the project in the United Nations. On December 5, 1958, a large majority of the UN General Assembly, including Canada, resolved to give UN support to the idea. WRY had two major aims:

- (1) To focus interest on the refugee problem and to encourage additional financial contributions from governments, voluntary agencies and the general public for its solution;
- (2) to encourage additional opportunities for permanent refugee solutions, through voluntary repatriation, resettlement or integration, on a purely humanitarian basis and in accordance with the freely-expressed wishes of the refugees themselves.

With a few weeks remaining before the end of the designated period, it appeared evident that substantial progress would be made through the WRY programme, in which some 76 nations and 12 territories had participated, toward the solution of several major refugee problems.

## **Progress in the International WRY Programme**

The budget of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the 1959 regular programme was \$4.7 million, for 1960 it is \$12 million, and for 1961 a level of \$6 million has been proposed. The additional funds available to the High Commissioner resulted from the sharp increase in regular contributions he had received as a result of World Refugee Year. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees also hoped to receive special contributions during World Refugee Year amounting, perhaps, to \$4 million.

Besides the above, governments had, by April 1960, announced special World Refugee Year contributions totalling \$11.5 million. The various national committees for World Refugee Year had announced a total target for WRY of some \$45 million, of which more than \$16 million had actually been collected. Over \$27 million, therefore, had in fact been raised by April for World Refugee Year purposes. Not all of the special funds contributed will be available to the regular programmes of the UN refugee agencies, since substantial amounts will be directed toward assisting those groups of refugees not within the formal mandate of the High Commissioner for Refugees or the UN Relief and Works Agency. The availability of financial resources on such a scale for refugee assistance programmes is certain to have a global impact on the refugee problem.

Two months before the end of the designated period, the High Commissioner was able to report that, in view of the success of the WRY appeal, it was already possible to envisage final satisfactory solutions to a number of refugee problems. He stated that by the end of 1959 a total of more than 70,000 refugees had