

An elderly man with a white turban and a dark, striped robe is crouching at a stone water fountain. He is washing his hands, and water is splashing from his palms into a stone basin. The background shows a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a clear sky.

# A LASTING IMPACT

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The Near East Foundation Celebrates a Century of Service









*The Near East Foundation expresses its sincere gratitude and admiration  
for the people of the Middle East, Africa, and Caucasus regions,  
whose determination, trust, and partnership have inspired us for a century.*

# A LASTING IMPACT

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**Cover: A village leader inspects an improved spring that delivers water to his community. Morocco's Oriental Region, 2013.**

**Previous pages: Three former Russian Army barracks at Alexandropol (now Gyumri, Armenia) were transformed into the world's largest orphanage. Orphans at the Alexandropol barracks, c. 1920.**

**A farmer plows his field in Ghana, 1962.**

This retrospective was prepared by Jennifer Abdella and Molly Sullivan, based upon the reports and records of the Near East Foundation. These materials are housed at the Near East Foundation offices in Syracuse, New York and the Rockefeller Archive Center in Tarrytown, New York. Unless otherwise noted, the images in this book are NEF photos. Many are housed at the Rockefeller Archive Center. NEF is grateful to the staff at the Archive Center for its research assistance and careful stewardship of the NEF archival collection.

Additional historical photographs, documents, and stories may be viewed at the Near East Relief Online Museum, an initiative of the Near East Foundation.  
[www.neareastmuseum.com](http://www.neareastmuseum.com)

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# A LASTING IMPACT

The Near East Foundation Celebrates a Century of Service

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## FOREWARD

For 100 years, the men and women of the Near East Foundation (NEF) have endeavored to assist the most vulnerable populations of the Caucasus, Middle East, and Africa.

**NEF was created** by individuals who used a thoughtful and scientific approach, found innovative solutions to entrenched problems, and dedicated themselves earnestly—and often heroically—to their partners in the communities they served. They worked at the frontiers of the field, helping people affected by conflict, natural disasters, and social, political, and economic marginalization. This book is a celebration of those moments where NEF and its staff made a difference in the fields of philanthropy and development—and an exploration of how our own organizational arc reflected, and was reflected in, the evolution of those fields and the events in the region.



It is NEF's mission to help vulnerable people build more prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable communities. Marginalized groups and conflict-affected people are often excluded from opportunities for economic and social advancement. They lack access to education and services. They do not have the power to influence public decision-making and are left behind, caught in poverty traps or insecurity that undermines their investments in their own economic or social development.

Since its founding, NEF has been committed to helping the most disadvantaged to overcome poverty and conflict to lead the development of their own communities. Our work is based on a conviction that a person's ability to play an active role in the progress of his or her community hinges on certain opportunities and tools: the knowledge to participate in civic and economic life, a voice in public decisions that affect well-being, and a means to make a meaningful living. This framework of Knowledge, Voice, and Enterprise embodies the philosophy reflected in all of NEF's work.

**Boys evacuated from the Turkish interior arrive at Antilyas Orphanage in Syria after the Smyrna disaster, c. 1923.**



**Refugee women and girls on a street in the Caucasus region, c. 1920. Near East Relief supported adult refugees by providing them with supplemental food, clothing, and work.**

In 1915, Near East Relief was created to respond to the Armenian Genocide taking place as the Ottoman Empire fell. At the time, intolerance and conflict resulted in the persecution of millions. The crisis was marked by forced deportations, mass executions, starvation, and destitution of minority populations. It left millions homeless, displaced, and orphaned. Near East Relief was created to mobilize aid for those left destitute by the conflict, regardless of nationality or creed. Orphan-



ages were created to assist the hundreds of thousands of children who had been separated from family. Immediate humanitarian needs were met with food, clothing, blankets, shelter, and medical attention. These soon gave way to longer-term concerns of self-sufficiency, and Near East Relief began to develop schools, vocational training, and recreation programs.

Early efforts to build the skills of orphans to lead productive lives soon ex-

**Bible class in Nazareth, c. 1924. Some classes were held outside to take advantage of the abundant fresh air, which was thought to help restore the orphans' health.**

panded to improving the conditions and livelihoods of the communities in which they settled. This work laid the foundation for pioneering social and economic development that would eventually inform post-World War II reconstruction efforts. The model that developed informed the work of President Truman's Point IV Program (which evolved into the U.S. Agency for International Development), the Peace Corps, and countless other organizations. What we know today as international development and international philanthropy started in 1915 with the efforts of a handful of people to "Save the Starving Armenians."



There has been tremendous global progress since Near East Relief was created 100 years ago. But the issues of global disparities, marginalization, and vulnerability have also grown more complex. Perhaps no issue crystalizes this fact more clearly than the tragedy in Syria, which has displaced millions of people, creating the greatest humanitarian crisis of our day. We cannot help but hear echoes of the tragedies that unfolded a century ago.

While we celebrate 100 years of an organization with indelible impact on global philanthropy and development, NEF is also commemorating its centennial through action. We have launched an initiative to help Syrian refugees and members of their host communities rebuild their economic security and resilience through the creation of small businesses and income generating activities. This initiative reflects the spirit and lessons of our early service.

America's response to the Armenian Genocide shaped our humanitarian impulse as a nation. The idea that average people could make a difference in faraway places started in 1915; it is part of who we are today. In spite of the complicated politics and violence that makes headlines, there is also hope at the local level. Modest investments can have transformative impacts on individuals, communities, and ultimately on entire nations. In the tumult, there is also great opportunity for change and for average people to have a positive and lasting impact.

This is as true today as it was in 1915.

The cover of a Golden Rule  
Sunday booklet, c. 1924.







Clockwise from top left: Children in front of the Bird's Nest Orphanage in Sidon, Syria, 1924. Bird's Nest children play with tricycles made by the boys training as carpenters at the nearby Maameltein Orphanage, 1924. Boys train in a NER machine shop in the Caucasus, c. 1920. Girls sew garments in an outdoor workshop at Kazachi Post Orphanage, Alexandropol, c. 1920.



RC TELEGRAM RECEIVED (GREEN CIPHER)

From Constantinople  
Dated September 3, 1915  
Recd Sept 3, 1915



Secretary of State,  
Washington.

1005, September 3, 9 a.m.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Minister of War has promised to permit departure of such Armenians to the United States; whose emigration I vouch as bona fide. Destruction of Armenian race in Turkey is progressing rapidly, massacre reported at Angora and Broussa. Will you suggest to Cleveland Dodge, Charles Crane, John R Mott, Stephen Wise and others to form committee to raise funds and provide means to save some of the Armenians and assist the poorer ones to emigrate, ... and perhaps to enlist California, Oregon and Washington to transport some of these people direct to their shores via Panama Canal.

Dispatched by MORGENTHAU,  
American Ambassador

Ambassador Henry Morgenthau's September 3, 1915 telegram reported that genocide was unfolding and called for action. It was responsible for the creation of Near East Relief.

## **Near East Relief: A Humanitarian Enterprise (1915–1930)**

On September 16, 1915, a volunteer Committee was formed in New York in response to the call of human distress from the other side of the world. It did not embody a purpose to create a great relief organization, nor did any member of the Committee imagine that service would be long required. With the call for help ringing in their ears, that group of serious men attempted only to make an immediate and effective reply. When later it became evident that the task was to be long, arduous and exacting, they did not falter but bent their backs to the load.

— NEF Founder James L. Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief* (1930).



## ORIGINS

**In 1915, a massive humanitarian crisis** was unfolding as the Ottoman Empire violently came to an end. Reports of atrocities against civilian minorities in Turkey made their way to America. Men of military age were executed en masse; women, children, and the elderly were forcibly deported—many on foot across the desert to Syria. On these death marches, they faced violence, starvation, and disease. More than 1.5 million Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians were killed.

In neighboring Syria, local populations were suffering under famine conditions caused by a combination of locusts and political blockades that prevented food from reaching them. Large numbers of Armenian refugees taxed local capacities even further, necessitating relief for refugees and local people alike.

The Near East Foundation traces its origins to these turbulent events. In September 1915, Henry Morgenthau, the American Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, sent a cable to the U.S. Department of State reporting that, “The destruction of the Armenian race is progressing rapidly.”

Within two weeks, a group of civic, business, and religious leaders, led by Cleveland H. Dodge and James L. Barton, formed a committee to lead a response to the tragedy. The committee agreed to raise \$100,000 to support relief. At that first meeting, the group raised \$60,000 from members’ personal funds. They raised the remainder by October and wired the full sum to Morgenthau in Constantinople.

Ambassador Morgenthau returned to the United States in February 1916, providing the committee with a detailed report on conditions in the Near East. His information came from observations and communications with missionaries in the Turkish interior. Morgenthau estimated that one million Armenians had survived the massacres of 1915. The survivors were mainly women and children, and all were destitute. People were dying of starvation. Morgenthau reported that survivors in Turkey, Persia, Syria, and Palestine could be reached by relief measures if funds were available. He estimated that \$5 million was needed. The committee made a public appeal for funds. By the end of 1916, it was assisting as many as 500,000 women and children.

Initially, the founding group called itself the “Armenian Relief Committee.” As additional relief efforts formed and were consolidated, the name changed to the “Armenian and Syrian Relief Committee” and then the “American Committee for Relief in the Near East.” In August 1919, the organization was incorporated by

Thousands of children were left orphaned by the Genocide. Relief worker with children, date and place unknown.



PEOPLE

## Henry Morgenthau

**Henry Morgenthau, Sr.** was the U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1914 to 1916. When he received word of the deportations of Armenians from the Turkish interior, Morgenthau exhausted diplomatic channels to avoid further casualties. He met with Ottoman officials, but made no progress. In 1916, demoralized by his inability to protect the minority populations, Morgenthau returned to the United States and resigned from his post as Ambassador. On Sept. 3, 1915, Morgenthau sent a telegram to the U.S. State Department requesting that the Secretary of State ask several prominent American men to form a committee to raise funds for Armenian refugees. This telegram launched the committee that would become Near East Relief.

a Congressional Charter and renamed Near East Relief (NER).<sup>\*</sup> It was designated as the primary channel for U.S. postwar aid to the region.

While World War I raged, it was impossible to send new personnel to the region. Near East Relief supported American, Danish, Swiss, and German missionaries, educators, consular agents, and other workers already there. They responded quickly to organize relief units that provided for survivors' basic needs. Between 1915 and 1918, hundreds of thousands of refugees were fed, clothed, housed, and given medical attention in camps and orphanages. After the Armistice in 1919, NER sent large groups of relief workers to the region.

Once the war subsided, NER turned its attention to the thousands of refugee children scattered across the former Ottoman territories. In Turkey, deportations had left the once-thriving mission stations in Armenian communities empty. Missionaries used NER funds to convert existing mission buildings into relief centers and orphanages. Harput and Constantinople became major orphanage centers in Turkey. Children in the Caucasus region found shelter in Kars, Erivan, and later Alexandropol.

<sup>\*</sup> The organization's efforts between 1915-1930 are best known under this name and, for ease of reference, we refer to the organization as "Near East Relief" or "NER" when discussing its work during this time.

## PIONEERING RELIEF WORK & CARING FOR ORPHANS

The turning point in American philanthropy came with Near East Relief. Its transcendent achievement was its pioneering work in vocational education, nurses training, the education of the handicapped, and in inducing the native governments to take over and expand these institutions. Finally, Near East Relief deliberately surveyed the needs of the Near East and sought new forms of philanthropic enterprises that might permanently improve the environment of the rural populations, approaches that could reach across the barriers of religion and nationality that had so often frustrated the missionary philanthropist.

—Historian Robert Daniel, *American Philanthropy in the Near East: 1820-1960* (1970)

By early 1921, NER was operating more than 20 orphanages in Turkey, with many more in Soviet Armenia and Syria.

**Between 1915 and 1930**, NER operated in Armenia, Turkey, Persia, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Greece, Egypt, and the Caucasus. NER rescued more than one million people from certain death by starvation and exposure and fed some 12 million people. At one point between 1919 and 1920, an average of 333,000 people were fed each day. NER built 40 hospitals and housed, taught, and cared for 132,000 orphans.

The largest single operation was a massive orphanage complex outside of Alexandropol, converted from three former Russian army bases. At its height, more than 20,000 children lived in this “Orphan City.” NER provided medical aid to six million people and was the vehicle for service to the region by hundreds of American volunteers—doctors, nurses, teachers, and social workers.

NER provided hope, home, training, and education to a generation



## Cleveland H. Dodge & the Dodge Family

**Cleveland H. Dodge** was born in New York City in 1860. Dodge's great-grandfather and grandfather had founded the Phelps-Dodge Corporation, a successful mining company. The family made a name for itself in business while building a reputation for philanthropy. William Earl Dodge, grandfather to Cleveland H. Dodge, was a founding board member of the YMCA and Syrian Protestant College (later the American University of Beirut).



Dodge joined the family business in 1884, becoming vice president in 1909. He became chairman of the board of trustees of Robert College in Constantinople the same year—a position he would hold until his death.

Dodge attended Princeton University with Woodrow Wilson, and the two became lifelong friends. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau's famous telegram warning of the "destruction of the Armenian race" mentioned Dodge by name. President Wilson contacted Dodge with Morgenthau's urgent request to form a relief committee.

Dodge called the first meeting of the group that would become Near East Relief in his office in Lower Manhattan on September 16, 1915. He was chosen as Treasurer. At that meeting, Dodge quietly informed Secretary Samuel T. Dutton that he would cover all operating expenses so that every dollar contributed by the public could be used for direct relief. Dodge financed NER's operating expenses until his death in 1926.

With World War I, the demand for copper increased dramatically. Dodge was deeply troubled by the idea of profiting from the war. He created the Cleveland H. Dodge Foundation in 1917, with a general mandate to use its resources "for the betterment of mankind." It continues to be an important supporter of NEF's work.

Dodge's twin sons, Cleveland and Bayard, continued their father's legacy of philanthropy. Cleveland E. Dodge was actively involved with NEF from 1920 to 1978. He was an NER Trustee and was named President of NEF at its creation in 1930—a position he held for 23 years. Under his leadership, the Near East Foundation established pioneering development programs in 26 countries. In 1953, Dodge became chairman of the NEF Board of Directors. He resigned the chairmanship in 1968, but continued to serve as an honorary chairman and member of the executive committee for the rest of his life.

Bayard Dodge was President of the American University of Beirut (AUB) from 1923 to 1948. His son, David S. Dodge, served on the AUB Board and as its vice president and acting president. David S. Dodge was the president of NEF in 1977-1978, and chairman of the Board of Directors for more than a dozen years in the 80s and 90s.

Today Cleveland H. Dodge's great-grandson, Johnson Garrett, continues his family's tradition of leadership within NEF as Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors.

“without a childhood.” It saved the remnants of Armenians, helping resettle them in Armenia, Lebanon, Syria, Cyprus, Greece, and the United States. And, it helped rescue other wartime victims including Assyrians, Greeks, Turks, and Kurds.

NER’s immediate goal was to provide physical relief to save the lives of those left destitute, starving, and ill. But it also built foundations for the orphans’ independence and prosperity.



**Education.** NER grew from an emergency relief organization into a massive educational system. Its orphanages not only sheltered the children of the Genocide, but also provided them a comprehensive elementary education. Children were taught games and music. They also began learning trades at an early age. NER’s goal was clear: the relief workers and their local assistants educated children to become productive and self-sufficient members of their new communities. Its vocational training courses reflected local demand and opportunity, offering more than 40 trades. Boys trained as carpenters, cobblers, farmers, mechanics, potters, and silversmiths. Girls learned homemaking skills that could also be used to earn a living, such as dressmaking, weaving, and cooking. NER workshops also helped to make the orphanages largely self-sufficient. The children made nearly all of the clothing and shoes for the orphanage population themselves.



**Healthcare.** The 132,000 children who grew up with Near East Relief also received medical care. As Dr. Mabel Elliott, NER’s Medical Director in the Caucasus, put it, every orphanage not only *had* a hospital; the entire orphanage *was* a hospital in which every single orphan was a patient. Every new arrival was treated for malnutrition. Many children suffered from exposure or frostbite, having had nothing but scavenged rags as protection against the elements. Most children suffered from at least one contagious disease, such as typhus or tuberculosis. In addition to immediate medical treatment, NER also undertook significant and lasting public health education and special education programs. It created nurse training schools to meet the demand for medical care. In many cases, these programs were later adopted by the local government and hospitals.



Near East Relief:  
A Humanitarian Enterprise  
(1915–1930)

The organization also assisted many children with disabilities who had been impacted by conflict or disease. A specialized hospital at Seversky Post in Alexandropol housed and treated 6,000 children suffering from trachoma. NER also founded the area's first school for the blind and sent local teachers to American schools for the blind for advanced training. The organization developed a Braille code for blind Armenian children.



Relief workers were responsible for every aspect of the orphans' lives, including education, religious training, recreation, and health. Clockwise from top: Bible class in Nazareth, c. 1924; an orchestra for blind children in Athens, 1924; a Near East Relief doctor and a Greek nurse care for an injured child, 1925; Dr. Mabel Elliott with a seriously malnourished patient, c. 1920.



## James L. Barton

**James L. Barton** grew up in a Quaker family in Charlotte, Vermont. He graduated from Middlebury College and earned an advanced degree from Hartford Theological Seminary. Dr. Barton was deeply committed to humanitarian work through missionary service. In 1885 he and his wife, Flora Holmes Barton, traveled to Turkey, where he supervised the missionary school system in Harput. In 1892 he was elected president of Euphrates College, an English-language theological seminary.

The Bartons returned to the United States in 1894. Barton continued to advocate for missionary schools in the Near East as the Foreign Secretary for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Boston.

He helped organize the first committee meeting in New York City on September 16, 1915. When it became apparent that the group's work would be long-term, Barton was asked to head the relief committee. He was named Chairman when NER was chartered by Congress in 1919.



Barton was a quiet but shrewd leader. Beginning in 1917, Barton asked American missionaries who were leaving Ottoman Turkey to send him detailed narratives of their experiences. These eyewitness accounts of the Armenian Genocide were instrumental in raising American consciousness of the tragedies and funds for relief work.

Barton worked tirelessly to unite philanthropists, relief workers, and the American people in one of the greatest humanitarian efforts of all time. He authored numerous books, articles, and let-

ters to prominent newspapers. In 1930, Barton published *The Story of Near East Relief*. This book is widely regarded as the authority on the organization's early history. Barton played an important leadership role during the transition from Near East Relief to Near East Foundation. And, as vice chairman of NEF, he traveled extensively and cultivated relationships with foreign leaders. At the time of his death in 1936, the *New York Times* praised Barton as "a Near East saint."



The quay at Smyrna, c. 1922. Near East Relief assisted hundreds of thousands of refugees awaiting evacuation from Turkey to Greece in the wake of the Smyrna disaster.

## SMYRNA: THE CRISIS CONTINUES

Although World War I had ended, the Greco-Turkish war continued from 1919-1922, fueled by the partitioning of the Ottoman territory. Turkish forces besieged Near East Relief centers in Armenia and throughout the Turkish interior.

NER workers were forced to make swift, life-saving decisions. In 1922, they began the arduous project of evacuating thousands of children. They went by truck, freight train, and barge. Some were on foot.

In 1922, the Turkish army launched a massive and coordinated attack at the Anatolian front. The Greek army collapsed. Refugees from the hinterland rushed into the city of Smyrna. NER's managing director, Harold Jaquith, traveled from Constantinople to Smyrna to help NER's local staff.

The Kemalist army marched into Smyrna in September 1922. A few days later, fires raged through the Greek and Armenian quarters. Tens of thousands died in the fire and accompanying atrocities. With fires raging and the Turkish troops' advancing, hundreds of thousands of people fled to the harbor. Many more died there. Some committed suicide by jumping into the water. Others died from exhaustion, disease, and starvation. Thousands remained huddled at the harbor for weeks, in unbearable conditions, waiting to be evacuated.

With the YMCA and the American Navy, Jaquith organized ships to evacuate the refugees and provide relief for those still on the quay. NER exhausted its local supplies. The bishop of Smyrna credited Near East Relief with saving at least 200,000 lives in the immediate aftermath of the Great Fire.

No other organization had a staff of relief workers and supplies in the area. The NER leadership in New York revisited a previous decision to discontinue relief work with adults. Soon, NER was heavily involved in all aspects of the evacuation of Christians from Turkey—not only from Smyrna, but also from the Black Sea and Pontus regions. Mass feeding operations were organized and ships chartered to distribute relief supplies. Soon NER was joined by the American Red Cross, which provided immediate relief to refugee settlements. NER workers found themselves caring for more children than ever.

Although already overwhelmed by successive wars, Greece opened its doors to the refugees. In 1923, the Greek and Turkish governments agreed to a compulsory population exchange under the Treaty of Lausanne. Nearly 1.5 million Christians (Greek and Armenian) living in Turkey were sent to Greece. Approxi-

**Near East Relief:  
A Humanitarian Enterprise  
(1915–1930)**

Near East Relief evacuated more than 20,000 children from the Turkish interior to safety in Greece, Syria, and Soviet Armenia. It established orphanages and relief stations in these areas to receive the evacuees. Near East Relief map, 1923.

Refugee woman and child in Beirut, c. 1922. Thousands of women refugees fled from Turkey to Beirut with children on their backs when the French army withdrew from Cilicia after World War I.



mately 400,000 Muslim Turks were sent to Turkey from Greece. Although the exchange took place under the auspices of the League of Nations, NER continued to feed and house the refugees until they were placed on ships. The full operation took almost two years, and Jaquith received awards from both Greece and Turkey for his role.

In the year following the Smyrna catastrophe, NER transported children across the Aegean Sea to impromptu facilities in Greece. Lodging ranged from warehouses to palaces to beachfront hotels. NER and the Greek government worked together to build new orphanages. The largest, on the island of Syra, housed more than 3,000 children in an ambitious industrial and agricultural school.

The remaining children were evacuated to Syria and Palestine. Some groups of orphans were moved four or five times. They traveled on foot or took turns riding donkeys. NER set up new orphanages in collaboration with groups already working in the area, such as the Red Cross and the Danish Women’s Missionary Workers. Once the orphans were settled, NER resumed its educational mission.





**"THEY SHALL NOT PERISH"**  
CAMPAIGN *for* \$30,000,000  
**AMERICAN COMMITTEE**  
**FOR RELIEF IN THE NEAR EAST**

## THE BIRTH OF CITIZEN PHILANTHROPY

**To fund these relief efforts,** NER conducted massive fundraising appeals in the United States. Through its national campaigns, NER built a constituency of American donors who felt a moral imperative to help people half a world away. Fundraising and media campaigns were aimed not only at traditional philanthropists, but also at rank and file donors. This allowed NER to create a broad base of support.

NER's efforts to generate popular support for its mission created a new model of philanthropy. It was wildly successful. Between 1915 and 1930, NER raised more than \$117,000,000—roughly \$1.6 billion in today's dollars.

NER created vibrant campaign materials to grasp the nation's attention. Designed by some of America's top artists, the posters and postcards featured captivating images (often of mothers and children) and memorable slogans. Contributors received periodic updates via NER "News Bulletins" and later the NER periodical, *The New Near East*. NER even used the new medium of film to raise money for the relief effort, creating movies that could be screened anywhere. The price of admission was usually a can of food or condensed milk. Silent film actors like Charles Ray and Norma Talmadge appeared in NER promotional materials. Child star Jackie Coogan embarked upon a Children's Crusade across America to collect money and supplies for NER. Outreach and publicity helped maintain the public's support and enabled NER to mobilize funds.

Millions of Americans became invested in NER's work. Communities in all 48 states, Hawaii, and Alaska launched NER committees to facilitate fundraising. NER counted churches, synagogues, and schools among its supporters and contributors. It also had the support and cooperation of fraternal organizations, Rotary clubs, community groups, chambers of commerce, agricultural and labor organizations, private businesses, and the media. Americans collected food and clothing at firehouses and schools, engaged well-known speakers, and held movie showings to raise money for the relief effort. Through observance of "Golden Rule Sunday," many families ate a simple meal akin to those offered to orphans. They then donated the cost of a typical American dinner to NER.

Presidential support also played a key role in generating popular support for NER campaigns. President Wilson's appeal letters in 1917 and 1918 called on the American public to give generously—and then to "give even more generous-

Patriotic posters  
appealed to Americans.  
This image of a fierce  
protector — part soldier  
and part guardian angel  
— evokes the Statue of  
Liberty. Poster by  
Douglas Volk, 1918.





PEOPLE ————— ❖

## Nellie Mann

**Nellie Miller was born** in Elkhart, Indiana in 1897 and first heard of the humanitarian crisis in the Near East while studying at Goshen College. Miller joined the Mennonite Relief Commission, accepting a two-year position as secretary to the treasurer of the NER headquarters in Beirut in 1921. Her letters from the field to her fiancé, Cleo Mann, and to her family document daily activities in Beirut, including the increasingly desperate refugee situation. Miller visited the refugee camps and orphanages as part of her work and curated a collection of photographs, taken by herself and by others.

Nellie Miller was a frequent and beloved visitor at the Bird's Nest Orphanage in Sidon, Syria, where Danish relief worker Maria Jacobsen lived with 400 young charges in a beautiful Druze palace near the sea. Miller's photos capture the essence of childhood in this busy household.

Nellie Miller and Cleo Mann were married in August, 1924. Nellie Miller Mann died in Indiana in 1997 at the age of 99. Her time in Beirut was formative. She saved her letters from the field for her entire life. Her son, David Mann, published her writings and photographs in the book *Letters from Syria, 1921-1923: A Response to the Armenian Tragedy, Including Stories, Travel and Reports* in 2013. Her photographs are part of the NEF archives at the Rockefeller Archive Center.

ly.”<sup>1</sup> He urged this generosity to ward off the otherwise “inevitable” death from starvation and exposure among refugees, and named Near East Relief as a primary channel for contributing aid to the region. NER also enjoyed the support of Presidents Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover. Herbert Hoover, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and William Howard Taft were members of the Board of Directors at one time. Presidents Eisenhower and Johnson sent presidential statements to be read at anniversary dinners in 1955 and 1966.<sup>2</sup>

The significance of Near East Relief's approach to raising funds from a broad population is evident by the choice of the term “Foundation” in the name given to its successor organization:

“Near East Foundation, non-sectarian, non-propagandist and non-political in its principles, is dependent entirely upon voluntary contributions. It is not the creation of any one person or small group of leaders but is an organization of thousands of interested individuals throughout the United States who contribute to a people's fund. These contributors have the right to expect, and will receive, the same careful administration of their gifts and the same gratifying returns



on their philanthropic investments which are commonly associated with the term ‘foundation.’”<sup>3</sup>

Together, these efforts gave birth to what is now known as “citizen philanthropy,” the idea that average people can make a meaningful difference in the lives of people in need in faraway places. This model of philanthropy — appealing directly to the public to support humanitarian causes — and many of the fundraising and publicity tools NER pioneered are used today by a majority of non-profit organizations around the world.

Across the country, Americans participated in collection days for Near East Relief. Top: Members of the Chamber of Commerce celebrate a successful Bundle Day in Auburn, NY, 1924; Bottom: Knights of Columbus in Rochester, NY with bundles, 1923.

## Stanley & Elsa Kerr

**Stanley E. Kerr** of Hopewell, New Jersey, was in the first large group of NER workers to ship out after WWI ended, in 1919.

In Aleppo, Syria, Kerr—who had studied biochemistry—established a lab to screen for malaria and typhus. He also worked as a photographer, documenting the orphans and recording their stories. He was deeply committed to rescuing women and children from captivity in Turkish and Kurdish homes. He estimated that he and his colleagues rescued more than 450 girls within a 50-mile radius of the city over the course of a few months.

Kerr transferred to Marash to become NER's superintendent of relief work in Cilicia. While in Marash, Kerr met Elsa Reckman, a mathematics teacher at Marash Girls' College. The couple would later marry in a NER personnel house.

The Turkish Nationalist regime besieged Marash in January 1920. Turkish soldiers massacred thousands of repatriated Armenians and attacked the American Hospital. NER workers converted schools and orphanages into safe havens. As violence in Marash increased, NER determined that the relief stations in Cilicia were no longer safe. In 1920, Elsa and Stanley were instrumental in evacuating children from NER orphanages in Marash to Syria. This arduous 500-mile journey through mountains and snow was made largely on foot.

Once in Beirut, Stanley Kerr served briefly as treasurer for NER operations in Syria and Palestine. He soon became the director of the new Nahr Ibrahim orphanage. The orphanage opened with about 650 boys in January 1923. By August it housed nearly 1000—all of whom had been evacuated from the Turkish interior. The Kerrs knew



many of the boys from Marash. Stanley supervised training in marketable trades; Elsa oversaw their education.

Tragedy struck Nahr Ibrahim in its first year when a malaria epidemic spread through the orphanage community. Many of the boys died. Nahr Ibrahim was closed and the remaining boys were transferred to the orphanage at Jubeil.

Stanley and Elsa Kerr traveled to America, where Kerr earned a Ph.D. in biochemistry from the University of Pennsylvania in 1925. They returned to Beirut, where he became the Chair of the Department of Biochemistry at the American University of Beirut (AUB). Elsa Kerr taught Mathematics at the Beirut Women's College and in 1950 was named Dean of Women at AUB. The Kerrs raised four children in Beirut before retiring to Princeton, New Jersey. Stanley Kerr published his memoirs, *Lions of Marash*, in 1973. He died in 1976, with Elsa following him in 1985.

Their son, Malcolm Kerr, also devoted his life to the region. A respected and well-known political scientist, he taught at the American University of Cairo and U.C.L.A and authored several books on relations among Middle East countries. He was named president of the American University in Beirut in 1982. Sadly, he served in this role for less than two years. Kerr was assassinated by two gunmen while walking to his office on campus on January 18, 1984.

Malcolm Kerr's son, John Kerr, a professor at Michigan State University's Department of Community Sustainability, continues his family's proud legacy. He serves on NEF's Academic Council and advises on NEF programs.



Child Actor Jackie Coogan and the boy scouts cooperated to fill a NER Milk Ship. Admission to Jackie Coogan movies was a can of milk, 1924. Top Right: Farmers in the American Midwest and Canada donated grain through the popular "Say it with Flour" campaign, 1921. Bottom: People around the world sent donations and, by 1918, the Committee had raised \$10,500,000 for relief.

# LEST THEY PERISH



CAMPAIGN *for* \$30,000,000

AMERICAN COMMITTEE  
FOR RELIEF IN THE NEAR EAST

ARMENIA - GREECE - SYRIA - PERSIA

ONE MADISON AVE., NEW YORK.

CLEVELAND H. DODGE, TREASURER

Many early Near East Relief posters featured powerful images of women and children. This poster is based on a 1921 photograph from *The New Near East* magazine. Poster by W.B. King, 1917.



The girls from Ghazir Orphanage earned a reputation as skilled weavers when they created an elaborate rug for President Calvin Coolidge. Coolidge and Near East Relief board member John H. Finley at the White House, December 1925.



Nearly 2,500 children form a message for the American public at Seversky Post, part of the Alexandropol orphanage complex, circa 1923. This iconic image was used in brochures and thank-you letters.

## **Near East Foundation: America's First International Development Organization**

To the extent Near East Relief was born of circumstance, the transformation of the organization to the Near East Foundation was the product of careful study and clearly articulated principles.





## A SURVEY OF THE NEAR EAST

**In 1925, as orphans graduated** and the immediate relief needs in the region subsided, NER began to consider what long-term contributions it could make to reconstruction in the region. The NER Board commissioned an independent committee to undertake a comprehensive survey of relief programs and American philanthropy in relation to the needs of the Near East.

The survey committee consisted of some of America's leading thinkers on education and rural reform, along with representatives of Near East Relief, other humanitarian organizations, mission boards, and Near East colleges.

The committee hired three investigators from Columbia University and the Institute of Social and Religious Research. Following months of preparation, the investigators spent several months surveying economic, social, and educational conditions in eight countries: Armenia, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Iraq, Palestine, and Syria. The initial report was vetted internally, then scrutinized by an overseas advisory committee of fifteen individuals representing different relief groups, colleges, and missions.

The report identified economic rehabilitation as "the most important service that could be rendered." It identified deplorable health conditions that impacted lives and impeded economic progress, and repeatedly cited the need for public health programming to prevent epidemics. In particular, the surveyors painted a picture of bleak poverty for women and children. "There is virtually nothing to enrich women's life. She and her children have an inefficient place in the economic system and a lowly one in the social. It is true that in some sections woman's lot is legally improved. But the mechanism for actually changing her status is almost entirely undeveloped."<sup>4</sup>

The survey stressed the need for "programs designed to promote self-help," working with and through local governments and organizations. It acknowledged that there was unfinished emergency work to be completed, namely the care of orphans still in NER orphanages and the settlement of people still displaced in the region. But it cautioned against a general program of emergency work, advocating instead that American philanthropy should commit itself to efforts "in the direction of diminishing the probability of these 'emergency needs' arising."<sup>5</sup>

The key observations and conclusions from the survey are clearly reflected in the principles that underpinned the creation and early work of the Near East

Meals at Near East Relief orphanages were efficient by necessity, with children dining in shifts. Antilyas Orphanage, Syria, c. 1922.



PEOPLE



## Barclay Acheson

**An ordained minister,** Barclay Acheson became the Associate General Secretary for NER in 1922. He spent the summer of 1922 visiting orphanages throughout the Near East. The experience left him with a profound appreciation for fieldwork. A year later, he assumed direction of all relief work in Greece, Syria, and the Caucasus. Acheson was based in Athens during the tumultuous population exchange between Greece and Turkey following the Smyrna disaster. By 1925, Acheson had become the Director of Overseas Operations.

Barclay Acheson received numerous accolades for his work with NER, including the Greek Red Cross Medal and the Greek Cross of the Redeemer. But when asked about his greatest accomplishment, Barclay Acheson simply said “I made the children laugh.”

When Near East Relief transitioned to the Near East Foundation, Acheson became the Executive Secretary. His leadership was central to the new organization's direction and purpose. He held that position for seven years, while also working as an associate editor at *Reader's Digest*. He left to work for *Reader's Digest* full-time in 1937. He continued his involvement with NEF as vice chairman of the board of directors. Acheson remained active on the NEF board until his death in 1957.

Acheson's daughter, Judy Thompson, and grandson, Geoffrey Thompson, served on the NEF Board of Directors for many years.

Foundation. The report concluded that the needs of rural populations were generally unmet, particularly in the area of practical training related to livelihoods, disease prevention, and recreation. Further, the report noted that the region's problems could not be addressed by creating foreign institutions, but rather required work through native institutions with native personnel. As such, rural education projects needed to engage local support and convince “influential classes of natives that such projects are worthwhile in terms of peace, prosperity and general happiness.”<sup>6</sup> These conclusions culminated in the observation that existing agencies either could not or would not undertake all the activities needed to fulfill these needs—foreshadowing the necessity of a new organization.





## H. Jaquith & Mary Jaquith

**Like many** NER workers, Harold C. Jaquith was highly educated and active in the church. He held a bachelor's degree from Trinity College, a master's degree from Columbia University, and a doctorate of divinity from Union Theological Seminary. Jaquith began his career as the assistant pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in New York City in 1912. Five years later he was named assistant secretary to Near East Relief. He toured the Near East in 1919 as leader of the Sunday School Commission and made a preliminary assessment of needs.



In 1921, Jaquith became Managing Director of NER in Constantinople. He oversaw operations for 180,000 orphans and refugees in the Constantinople area. Jaquith's impassioned cablegrams from the field painted a horrific picture of the ongoing refugee situation. His accounts of the plight of refugees after the burning of Smyrna in September 1922 were particularly chilling. Jaquith wrote that the Turkish Nationalist army was taking advantage of the chaos to conduct additional deportations. His eloquent articles and pleas for aid were frequently published in *The New Near East* magazine and national news outlets.

In 1923, Jaquith was appointed to help oversee the resettlement of approximately 400,000 ethnic Turks from Greece as part of the population exchange between Greece and Turkey brought on by the Smyrna disaster. He negotiated the safe



release of thousands of prisoners of the Greco-Turkish War. Both governments decorated Jaquith for his work.

Jaquith met Marie Harin at the NER office in Constantinople. A native of Russia, she grew up speaking Russian, French, and English. Her family fled Yalta in 1920. When Harin's parents moved on to Yugoslavia, she chose to remain in Constantinople, where she worked as a NER interpreter and adopted the name "Mary." The couple was married in Yugoslavia in November 1925 and made their home in Constantinople. H.C. Jaquith became the NER Associate General Secretary in 1927. He was instrumental in overseeing the transition from Near East Relief to the Near East Foundation. The family moved to New York City in 1929.

Harold Jaquith served as an executive officer with NEF from 1930 to 1933, when he left to pursue a career in higher education administration. He died in April 1943 at the age of 54.

Mary Jaquith spent the War years working for the FBI in New Haven, Connecticut, where her language skills were put to good use. She went on to teach French and Russian at the high school and college levels. In 1946, she became one of the United Nations' first simultaneous interpreters. She retired from full-time interpreting at the age of 60 but continued to work on a freelance basis until age 82. Mary Jaquith died in 1985 at the age of 87.



Vocational training was an essential component of Near East Relief's educational philosophy. Boys learning to smith in Syra, Greece, 1926.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEAR EAST FOUNDATION

“The solution of the problem is mass education of a simple, direct sort, carried to the people in their fields and in their workshops. It must be an education vital to their lives as tillers or craftsmen ... It should accent ‘helping to do’ rather than ‘doing for.’”

— *The Near East and American Philanthropy: A Survey, Conducted under the Guidance of the General Committee of the Near East Survey* (1929).

**In 1930, the NER Board** voted to incorporate a new organization—the Near East Foundation (NEF) — “for the purpose of meeting the unmet needs as outlined in part by the survey.” The survey provided a blueprint for NEF’s initial work. It also marked a pivotal moment in the history of the organization and “gave direction to a new emphasis in overseas programs to become known in time as technical assistance.”<sup>7</sup>

The NER Board had directed its officers and employees to “cooperate in every way possible” and committed to “encourage and facilitate the new organization ... by the transfer of ... organizational momentum and good will.”<sup>8</sup> NEF was appointed NER’s agent and charged with operating NER’s remaining orphanages. This involved caring for the last orphans and either adopting or winding down the remaining NER projects.

Members of the NER Board took leadership roles within the new organization. Cleveland E. Dodge was elected president of NEF. NER Co-founder and Chairman James L. Barton became Vice President. Edwin Bulkley, who had been



Chairman to the NER Executive Committee, became Treasurer. Otis Caldwell, Thomas Jesse Jones, Paul Monroe, and Ora Morgan, specialists who had advised NER in the 1920s, also joined the board and became the “brain trust” that operated as the NEF Program Committee. There was no change in the leadership of the organization in the United States or abroad for more than a decade.

NEF’s overarching objective was to help people in the Near East to improve their own lives and prospects. Its creation signaled a shift from purely humanitarian endeavors to programs designed to improve self-sufficiency and resilience against future upheaval. It was “the first American organization expressly designed to undertake technical assistance work abroad,”<sup>9</sup> and it became a force for human and economic development in the region.

NEF would operate at a much smaller scale than NER—a fact that reflected both its more limited resources and its shift in mission. Instead of large scale relief (“doing for” communities), NEF would serve as a laboratory of sorts, helping communities develop solutions that they could implement themselves.

From the outset, NEF was guided by a clear statement of its purpose and pro-

**Simple agriculture dominated the Near East, where eighty-five percent of the population was rural. NEF’s leadership saw an opportunity to help people lift their standard of living through improved agriculture. Date and location of photo unknown.**



## NEF Statement of Purpose and Program:

### I.

To work with the peoples of the Near East to discover and remove the causes of their poverty, disease, and retarded development.

### II.

To alleviate conditions arising from ignorance, famine, pestilence, and war.

### III.

To create in Near East communities a consciousness of the needs of their neglected childhood and womanhood.

### IV.

To raise the standards of living in village and rural communities by a non-institutional, extension program of education.

### V.

To conduct all programs with the approval and cooperation of local leaders through local agencies and organizations.

### VI.

To transmit, adapt, and apply by means of demonstrations, modern technique in dealing with problems of health, agriculture, child and community welfare and leadership training.

### VII.

To introduce and support only projects which ultimately can be carried on by native leadership and resources, and which will stimulate similar indigenous activities.

### VIII.

To maintain a continuous study of results, needs, and opportunities and to adjust each project to changing conditions.

### IX.

To conserve and make permanent the moral, educational and spiritual values of fifteen years of Near East Relief service.

### X.

To express the highest ideals of international friendship and service in terms of the common needs and aspirations of humanity.

— NEF, *A Twentieth Century Concept of Practical Philanthropy* (1931).



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## E.C. Miller

**Edward C. Miller** was born in New York City in 1892. The young man—known to all as “E.C.”—worked as the business manager of the West Side YMCA. In 1917, YMCA board members encouraged Miller to work on the War Savings Stamp Plan in Washington, D.C. Miller joined the Navy less than a year later, and worked in naval intelligence for the duration of World War I.

Anguished by stories of the atrocities against Christian minorities in Asia Minor, he joined NEF in 1919 and served as assistant treasurer. Miller continued to work for the organization during the transition to NEF, rising to the level of treasurer and controller in the early 1930s. Constantly on the lookout for ways to help business operations run more smoothly, he developed a system of accounting for fundraising agencies that became widely used in the philanthropic community. Miller was named Executive Director of NEF in 1937.

In February 1939, Miller was made a Chevalier of the Greek Order of the Phoenix by King George



in appreciation of NEF’s work and in honor of Miller’s twentieth year with the organization. King Zog of Albania named Miller a Knight Commander of the Order of Skanderbeg for NEF’s assistance in developing Albanian schools.

Miller was instrumental in the collaboration between NEF and UNRRA during World War II. After World War II, Miller continued to develop collaborations between

public and private agencies involved in overseas work.

Miller retired in 1957 after 38 years with the organization, including 20 years as its director. He continued to serve as a consultant and secretary to the Board of Directors. He also taught seminars at Columbia University and New York University. Miller was a founder of the New York Office Management Association and the New York Council of Social Agencies. E.C. Miller died in August 1963.

Miller’s grandson, Ronald Miller, served on the NEF Board of Directors for many years. He remains on the Honorary Board today.

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## Charles V. Vickrey



**Charles V. Vickrey** came to Near East Relief on loan from the Layman's Missionary Movement in 1915. Vickrey is credited with overseeing NER's promotional campaigns in his role as General Secretary. Although Vickrey traveled to the Near East several times, his true calling was on the home front. Vickrey traveled more than 7,000 miles per year, spreading the NER message throughout the United States.

Vickrey launched one of NER's most famous promotional campaigns in 1923. In six short weeks, he organized the first-ever Golden Rule Sunday on December 2. Families would eat a meal similar to those served in NER orphanages and donate to the relief effort the money that they would have spent on a traditional Sunday dinner. The New York Times reported that former President Wilson had promised to dine on beans and corn grits. Several members of Congress signed Golden Rule pledges. President Coolidge announced that the Coolidge family and the cabinet would participate. More than one million Americans partook of a simple four-cent meal on the first Golden Rule Sunday. Even John D. Rockefeller, Jr. ate an orphanage-style meal. Golden Rule dinners were held around the world.

The campaign was so successful that it was made into an annual event. Fifteen hundred

prominent New Yorkers attended NER's first official Golden Rule Dinner at the Hotel Roosevelt on September 25, 1924. The guests dined on macaroni, cheese, apricots with corn syrup, bread, and cocoa. They used tin plates and cups that orphanage children had made from empty condensed milk cans.

The dinner was the first of 500 similar events held throughout the United States that year, culminating in the observance of Golden Rule Sunday in private homes on December 7.

Even the children in NER orphanages participated, eating even simpler meals of rice and raisins and donated their usual food to children in nearby refugee communities.

Vickrey had created an immensely popular new form of philanthropy. NER published Vickrey's Golden Rule Sunday: A Handbook in 1926. The book contained everything needed to organize a Golden Rule event, including instructions for recruiting prominent businessmen and clubwomen to serve on a leadership committee, poems and readings, and even sheet music for an original Golden Rule hymn.

Charles V. Vickrey left NER in 1929 to launch the Golden Rule Foundation, which raised funds to help poor children all over the world. Vickrey died at age 90 in 1966.



Near East Relief hosted the annual Henry Morgenthau Poster-Poem-Slogan contest with prominent judges and a \$500 prize. In 1926, G. Patrick Nelson of New York won first prize with this poster advertising Golden Rule Sunday.

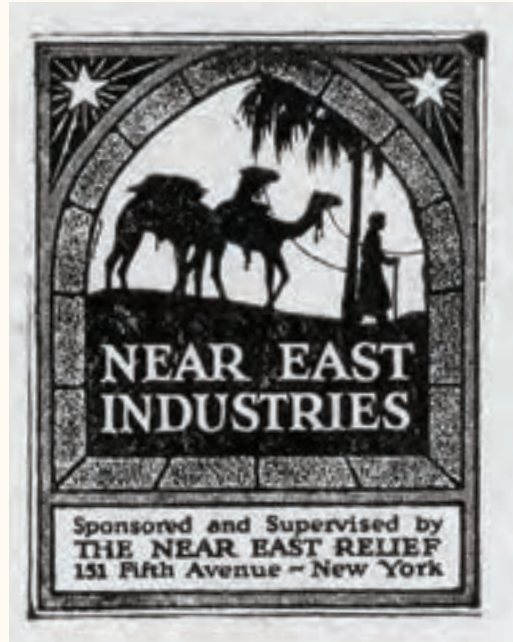


Weaving was not only a marketable skill for young women—the reproduction of traditional designs also helped to preserve cultural heritage. Ghazir, Syria, c. 1924.

**From the beginning,** NER sought to provide children with marketable skills and adult refugees with an opportunity to earn a living. Near East Industries developed naturally from the textile workshops created to help clothe thousands of orphans and train young women in a trade that would later help them achieve self-sufficiency. Visitors to NER centers consistently praised the beauty and uniqueness of the women's wares, particularly the traditional weaving and embroidery that seemed so exotic to the American eye.

Two NER workers would convert interest in these ornate crafts into opportunity, creating a successful export company—Near East Industries—from NER workshops. The daughter of a classicist and former U.S. Minister to Greece, Priscilla Capps Hill was practically born to a career in the Near East. She joined NER in Athens in 1923 and was named overseas director of Near East Industries in 1925. Rose Ewald of Yonkers, New York, had spent six years as a NER worker in various locations. She had been the supervisor of supplies at the Kazachi Post factory, ensuring that the workers had the raw materials to sew clothing for 15,000 orphans.

Ewald traveled to other NER centers in Turkey and Syria. She saw women and girls producing beautiful garments, lavish carpets, and delicious preserves to sell in the community. These goods were popular souvenirs for American tourists to the Holy Land. Ewald was particularly impressed by the weaving and embroidery produced by refugee women in Greece and Syria. When Ewald returned to



the United States, she agreed to serve as the American director of Near East Industries.

Near East Industries was dedicated to employing refugee women. It operated in Greece, Armenia, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Lebanon. Each woman employed by Near East Industries had, on average, four dependents and was the sole breadwinner for her family. Many had survived deportations and massacres only to find themselves in a new country with no means of self-support. The women had few obviously marketable skills, but they carried an incredible knowledge of traditional craftsmanship. Near East Industries workers earned \$0.50 per day for their labor.

A confluence of Armenian, Greek, Russian, and Turkish cultures resulted in stunning textiles rich with historical meaning. Drawing upon the region's long history of sericulture,



Clockwise from top left: A handmade "lace luncheon set" advertised in a Near East Industries catalog. The pieces ranged in size from five inches (selling for thirty-five cents) to twenty-two inches in diameter (\$9.50). Refugee women in Salonika, Greece weave rugs from unraveled sweaters, 1925. The Near East Industries shop in New York City, c. 1926

the women worked with locally-made raw and spun silk. Hill worked with the women to identify traditional weaving and embroidery patterns. And customers clambered for traditionally embroidered clothing, bags, and linens.

The inventory grew to include other items made by children in NER orphanages, such as traditional Armenian Kutahya pottery painted in Jerusalem. Wild thyme honey contained in Kutahya jars were advertised for sale in the United States. Near East Industries also hired women to make over donated materials from the United States into usable garments. Thus, army surplus bed sheets became girls' dresses and canvas stretchers became work aprons for young cobblers. Unusable sweaters

were unraveled and woven into new carpets.

As the American director, Rose Ewald handled all aspects of Near East Industries business stateside. This included the operation of the flagship Near East Industries store at 151 Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, which was advertised as "a corner of old Stamboul" in reference to the picturesque area in Constantinople. Ewald also supervised a collection of smaller shops in other U.S. cities, including Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia. She organized seasonal bazaars and special events in New York City. Hill made frequent sales trips to the United States to promote Near East Industries' wares.

Under the guidance of Ewald and Hill, Near East Industries, which operated as a NER subsidiary, became a successful business. Annual profits from American sales alone exceeded \$100,000 per year.

As tensions mounted in pre-World War II Greece, Hill was adamant about keeping Near East Industries running in Athens. It was the sole source of income for 350 women. Near East Industries closed its retail efforts in January 1940 due to the lack of tourism abroad and impossibility of shipping goods regularly to the United States. But, its workshops and sales rooms found new utility as part of the Near East Foundation's war relief efforts in Greece.

Hill and her family fled Greece after the Nazi occupation began. Ewald continued to operate Near East Industries in the United States on a progressively smaller scale until her retirement from NEF in 1952.

**A celebrated embroidery worker at a Near East Industries workshop, c. 1925. The women employed by Near East Industries often were the sole source of support for their families.**



**Opposite page: A Near East Industries workshop in Athens; c. 1940. The workshops first operated under the name "American Friends of Greece Refugee Embroideries," but by 1931 were using the name "Near East Industries."**

AMERICAN FRIENDS OF GREECE  
REFUGEE EMBROIDERIES







## CHAPTER 3

### **Pioneering Social & Economic Development (1930–1940)**

From the start, the newly created Near East Foundation devoted its efforts to helping rural people to lift themselves out of poverty.

Previous pages: NEF home welfare worker Zaida Kurd Ali leads children in exercises at the Nashabeyeh Day Nursery, Syria, 1955. Below: NEF recruited local workers who were familiar with traditional farming practices. These workers helped to incorporate new techniques and equipment. Photo date and location unknown.

Over 85 percent of the region's population lived in rural areas, and NEF saw their elevation as key to the region's revival. But NEF also would continue its earlier work with youth, and particularly former orphans, in cities, through schools, playgrounds, health campaigns, and welfare centers.

NEF's leadership believed its work could counter the kind of widespread strife that had led to regional tumult previously. In 1934, NEF wrote optimistically about the promise of its work: "Where it is possible to point the way toward progress and to help solve the basic problems of food and health, then enormous local forces become harnessed to work for peace and prosperity, affecting not only the immediate environment but making its contribution to peace at large."<sup>11</sup>



## THE AIM OF ALL FOUNDATION WORK: LOCAL OWNERSHIP

[NEF] differs from most philanthropic organizations in one fundamental. It seeks to develop the indigenous potentialities of each country, to show the people how they may help themselves. This objective cannot be stated too many times, in order that it may be clearly understood and remembered as being the corner stone of all Foundation building. It is not interested in transplanting foreign culture and applying it like a veneer which will crack and wear off with time.

—NEF, *Annual Report* (1933)

**Through practical education** of the masses and the development of indigenous leadership, NEF's programs were intended to facilitate reconstruction and self-sufficiency.

A three-stage framework guided all NEF programs. First, an exploratory or pilot phase would identify local needs and help develop locally appropriate procedures and activities. Next, the program would grow into a demonstration stage that, although subject to refinement, generally did not require wholesale changes. Finally, the program would be integrated into existing government or community programming.

This work depended upon the commitment of local people to achieve the ultimate—and as NEF considered it, the most vital—aim: adoption of NEF programs into the fabric of the community or government. To assure it could accomplish this goal, NEF worked only at the invitation of local governments and invested in local staff. Often, host governments contributed a sizeable share of project financing—in 1934, government contributions amounted to roughly a quarter of NEF's program budget. Government partners also loaned government-paid personnel to NEF projects, gave scholarships to support students at NEF schools, and provided materials to NEF project farmers. NEF invested in local leadership by sending promising local staff to the United States for advanced study at American colleges and universities. Upon return, these students took positions within NEF programs and elsewhere in their communities.

## THE MACEDONIA PROJECT: A FIELD TEST OF NEF'S DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

**NEF's early programs** were guided by and tested the organization's founding principles. They built upon and refined learning from the NER programs and the Near East Survey. Between 1930 and the outbreak of World War II in 1940, NEF worked in Greece, Syria, Bulgaria, Albania, Turkey, Egypt, Palestine, and Cyprus.

Perhaps no program more deliberately engaged NEF's organizing principles than the Macedonia Project, which began in 1928. The wheels had already been set in motion to create a new organization focused on practical education for the benefit of whole communities, rather than only orphans. The needs of a new wave of refugees accelerated the program's development.

The expulsion of Christian minorities from Turkey following the Greco-Turkish war (including in the wake of the Smyrna catastrophe) and the compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey resulted in the flight of one and a half million ethnic Greeks and Armenians from Turkey to Greece. Greek Macedonia, a region in northern Greece, absorbed nearly one million refugees. They settled into constructed resettlement villages or farms left vacant by the Anatolian Greeks who had relocated to Turkey. Many of the new arrivals had been farmers, but they were challenged by unfamiliar and sometimes depleted

soils, scant resources, and a different climate. They struggled to get by in their new homes.

The Greek government requested help resettling the refugees. NER agreed. NEF would continue the work beyond the exploratory phase. And so, under the leadership of NER veteran Dr. Harold B. Allen, the organization embarked on its first comprehensive agricultural education and community development program in 1928.

The Macedonia Project would

NER began resettling older orphans in Greek Macedonia in 1923. They started small farms on land that was left empty as a result of the population exchange between Greece and Turkey.



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## Harold B. Allen

**Harold B. Allen** began his career as a professor of agriculture at his alma mater, Rutgers University. He specialized in rural or “extension” education. In 1926 Allen took a two-year leave of absence from Rutgers to work with NER as Education Director, based in the Caucasus region. The Armenian government had granted 17,600 acres of land to NER in 1922 for agricultural development. Allen’s expertise was essential.

Allen traveled to Greek Macedonia in 1928 to create a new agriculture program for the area. He viewed the home and farm as inseparable: improve one, and you will improve the other. His innovative, holistic work combined health, hygiene, agriculture, and eco-



nomics development to improve the lives of rural people. Allen’s Macedonia program became the model for NEF’s work across the globe.

After ten years in Macedonia, Allen returned to the United States. He was named President of the National Farm School in Doylestown, Pennsylvania (now Delaware Valley University). Allen rejoined NEF as Director of Education and continued to consult with the Board for many years. Allen was appointed head of the United

Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization Mission in Fundamental Education to the Arab States in 1950. Dr. Allen received the Gold Cross and the Order of the Phoenix from the Greek government for his work with NEF. He died in 1970.

exemplify the three-phase model of exploration, demonstration, then integration. Its substantive framework, however, was found in the work of Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones, an internationally-known educator and Director of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, whose work strongly influenced Dr. Allen and NEF. Dr. Jones’ philosophy of education advocated that programs should be built around four “essentials” of individual and community life: (1) health and sanitation, (2) use of the environment’s resources and opportunities in support of livelihoods, (3) home and family life, including attention to the role of women and children, and (4) recreation, including physical, intellectual, and spiritual pursuits. This philosophy was reflected in many of NEF’s programs. The Macedonia Project served a laboratory to experiment with techniques to promote these essentials among Greece’s rural



PEOPLE ————— ❖

## Thomas Jesse Jones

Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones' work as an educator and sociologist spanned New York City, the American South, Africa, and the Near East. Interracial relationships and the role of education among racial minorities and rural people were the predominant focus, with special interest in African Americans, among whom his work was controversial. His philosophy was articulated in *Four Essentials of Education* (1926) and expanded upon in *Essentials of Civilization* (1929).

At the time the Macedonia Project was proposed, Dr. Jones was an advisor to Near East Relief. He was the architect of the survey of the Near East that informed the recast of Near East Relief as Near East Foundation. He served on the NEF Board of Directors and chaired its Program Committee from 1930 until shortly before his death in 1950. Through these positions, he played an important role in shaping NEF's fundamental approach to rural reconstruction in the Near East.

inhabitants.

Based upon a pilot program in five villages, NEF concluded that livelihood activities were the highest priority for the resettled villages and that “the other three essentials would have to be added by slow degrees as experience was gained and confidence won.”<sup>12</sup>

The full demonstration program launched in 1929, reaching 54 villages. Clayton Whipple, a Cornell University graduate and a supervisor of agricultural education in the state of New York, was hired to supervise. Allen also recruited Basil Moussourros, a Greek Ministry of Agriculture employee, and sent him to Cornell for a year of specialized study “in anticipation of the day when the American might be replaced with a native of the country.”<sup>13</sup>



**Agriculture & Livelihoods.** The program would focus on farmer education to improve the communities' agricultural production. Dr. Allen rejected the idea of turning to formal agricultural schools that “little resemblance to the villagers' own native environment.”<sup>14</sup> Instead, he designed a program of agricultural extension combined with vocational instruction, adapted to the Greek context and mobilized through local field workers.



Women in a Macedonian village inspect silk cocoons. The Macedonia Project worked with villagers to promote sericulture, particularly among women, by planting mulberry trees and building silkworm nurseries. Greece, c. 1930s.

Project staff were found among recruits from primary and secondary agricultural schools. Over time and with intensive on-the-job training, a corps of talented agricultural field workers developed. Each field worker was assigned to a cluster of villages. He traveled from village to village, advising farmers on tree and vineyard production, raising tobacco, cotton, corn, potatoes, legumes, and other vegetables, silk production, animal husbandry, beekeeping, and control of pests and diseases. Local committees of farmers were organized to inform planning and implementation.

As the project progressed, Greek staff became more involved in its leadership. In 1934, Basil Moussouros was made director of the project's agricultural section.





A mobile library regularly delivered books to Macedonian villages. 1930s.

refugee named Theodore Pays at its head. Pays had worked for Near East Relief in Constantinople and, in 1922, accompanied orphan children evacuated from that city to Greece. Soon Pays organized reading rooms, community centers, and village and mobile libraries.

Pays helped organize playgrounds and hired a music teacher to tour the area and teach villagers to play instruments. He started an organization, the Future Farmers of Greece, which drew upon elements of the Future Farmers Movement of America, 4-H Clubs, and the scouting movement. Local chapters were established in the villages. Soon, they became an important platform for coordinating recreational activities and other project activities.



**Recreation.** Dr. Allen interpreted recreation in its broadest sense as a re-creation of culture damaged by war and forced migration. NEF made sports equipment available to help address the need for leisure activities in the villages and refugee resettlements. Before long, the communities organized sporting events and inter-village competitions.

When NEF created a department of recreation in 1930, it placed a Russian



**Home Welfare.** The Home Welfare department, added in 1931, broke new ground by reaching out to rural women. Greek women played a vital role in the household economy by cooking meals, caring for children, sewing and washing the family's clothing, raising domestic animals, and laboring in the fields. Women were exposed to disease from contaminated water and soil. The infant mortality rate was high. Childcare was a constant issue, and mothers often had no choice but to take their babies into the fields or place them in the care of older siblings.

NEF recruited Martha Parrott to educate Greek women about health and hygiene in the home. Parrott, another graduate of Cornell University, was an ex-

perienced home economics teacher and extension agent who had taught at the American Farm School in Salonika. Parrott understood that American principles of extension would require considerable modification to work in Greece, and she embarked on her own exploratory program, using short term projects to test procedures and understand the needs of the village women.

Parrott settled on the use of a system of “village centers” that consisted of typical village homes housing two Greek women recruited and trained by NEF as public health nurses and home economists. The women served as role models and instructors. Through their demonstrations and home visits, the program trained village women in improved food preparation, sewing, first aid, hygiene and disease prevention, child care, gardening, beekeeping, and poultry raising.

NEF opened day nurseries in several villages. Though initially skeptical, local women soon embraced them. A well-baby clinic provided prenatal and infant care with support from local physicians, who made regular rounds.



**Sanitation.** The impact of poor sanitation was readily apparent in Macedonia. Rampant and preventable diseases including malaria, typhoid, and dysentery, plagued rural people. Apostolos Koskinides, an NER relief worker and layman, approached Dr. Allen about addressing sanitation to help eliminate these scourges. Without formal qualifications or a budget to speak of, Koskinides set out to improve conditions in one particularly unhealthy village in the demonstration area. Within months, Koskinides and the villagers had eliminated breeding grounds for malarial mosquitoes, cleaned and protected the springs where the village drew its water, repaired the village road, and covered its dump.



A student in the Macedonia Project's public health program, c. 1939. NEF established its first Home Welfare Center in Makriyalos, Greece. The center worked to teach the community simple techniques for improving home hygiene, sanitation, and food and diet practices.

Struck by these accomplishments, NEF sent Koskinides to a three-month san-

## Apostolos Koskinides

**Apostolos Koskinides** was born in Konia, Turkey in 1897 to an Anatolian Greek family. He worked as a pharmacist's apprentice to pay high school tuition at the American Mission College. When the pharmacist was drafted into the Ottoman army in 1914, he left Koskinides in charge of the business.

Koskinides was soon drafted into the army where he became an interpreter for English and French prisoners of war. This fortuitous assignment may have saved his life: Greeks and Armenians were not allowed to bear arms, and the draft was often a pretext for massacre.

In 1915, Koskinides returned to Konia on sick leave. He befriended the American physicians who cared for him, and the doctors recruited Koskinides to help prepare vaccinations and quarantine the sick to fight outbreaks of smallpox. He was later transferred to Kadin Han, where he was "the only health man" for a population of 100,000.

After WWI, Koskinides served in the British Army as an interpreter. In 1923 he joined the Refugee Settlement Commission. NER recruited him to be a field representative in Macedonia where he placed orphans with families or in jobs. Through careful searching, Koskinides located close relations for more than 3,000 NER children.

Koskinides, a layman, suggested that NEF add a Sanitary Engineering department to Dr. Harold Allen's Macedonia Project. His work won him a spot at the Rockefeller Foundation's sanitation training



program. Koskinides returned to Macedonia, where he conducted transformative work with local staff and resources.

With the outbreak of WWII, Koskinides joined the Macedonian Health Department. Throughout the war, he continued to work for NEF and the Health Department to prevent disease in rural villages that had become crowded with refugees. After occupation, Koskinides advised UNRRA on organizing

malaria prevention work in Macedonia.

In 1946, Koskinides attended the University of North Carolina. Upon his return to Athens he led the Brown-Koskinides Mission, which oversaw health and sanitation for 700,000 refugees of the Greek Civil War.

In 1952, Koskinides organized the NEF Sanitation School in the village of Palasht, Iran. He created the country's first teaching materials on the subject and trained 420 sanitary engineers. Koskinides spent the next seven years educating extension agents and addressing sanitation problems in Iranian villages. In 1959, Koskinides relocated to Jordan as an NEF community development specialist.

Although Koskinides retired to Athens in 1960, he remained active. Koskinides was a regular correspondent with NEF leadership and acted as a liaison and ambassador for NEF. In letters as late as 1980, he describes taking visitors to view NEF programs that had been adopted by the Greek government.

itation course offered by the Rockefeller Foundation and the School of Hygiene in Athens. Koskinides soon became a respected authority in Greece on rural sanitation, and later his services would be in demand for projects beyond Greece.

Upon his return from the Rockefeller Foundation course, Koskinides developed a roster of sanitation projects that could be accomplished under NEF supervision with local labor and existing supplies. Within a few years, the Macedonia Project's Sanitation Department became the locus of an apprenticeship course for trainees in the Ministry of Health's sanitation program. Koskinides, who continued working with NEF, was granted civil service status. He strategically took a "learn-by-doing" approach that provided trainees with practical experience and expanded his workforce for Macedonian sanitation projects.



**Results & Integration.** As the project continued, the impact on improved living standards and reduced disease was clear. A survey determined that improved farming practices yielded an excellent return on investment: increased agricultural income was ten times greater than the project's costs. In one village, average income increased 67 percent between 1934 and 1938.

In 1937, the government of Greece passed a law that incorporated many of the Macedonian Project's elements into government services. The Ministry of Agriculture made plans for a Greek agricultural extension program and recalled Basil Moussouros to head the Division of Agricultural Education. NEF determined it would shift the emphasis of its program towards leadership training for government agents. Another NEF staff member, Nicholas Theodorou, was selected to develop a program similar to Macedonia's agricultural department in another district.

Before any of these plans could be acted upon, however, World War II intervened and the Macedonia Project was effectively halted.

World War II, the Axis occupation, and the Greek Civil War took a heavy toll. Many project villages were bombed and depleted. In spite of damage, a 1950 survey found the villagers continued to follow many of the practices they had been taught more than a decade before. And they desperately wanted new training.

The Macedonia Project became a model for engaging in rural reconstruction and development. Its success led other governments to seek NEF's assistance.

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It is a new and much needed type of practical philanthropy.

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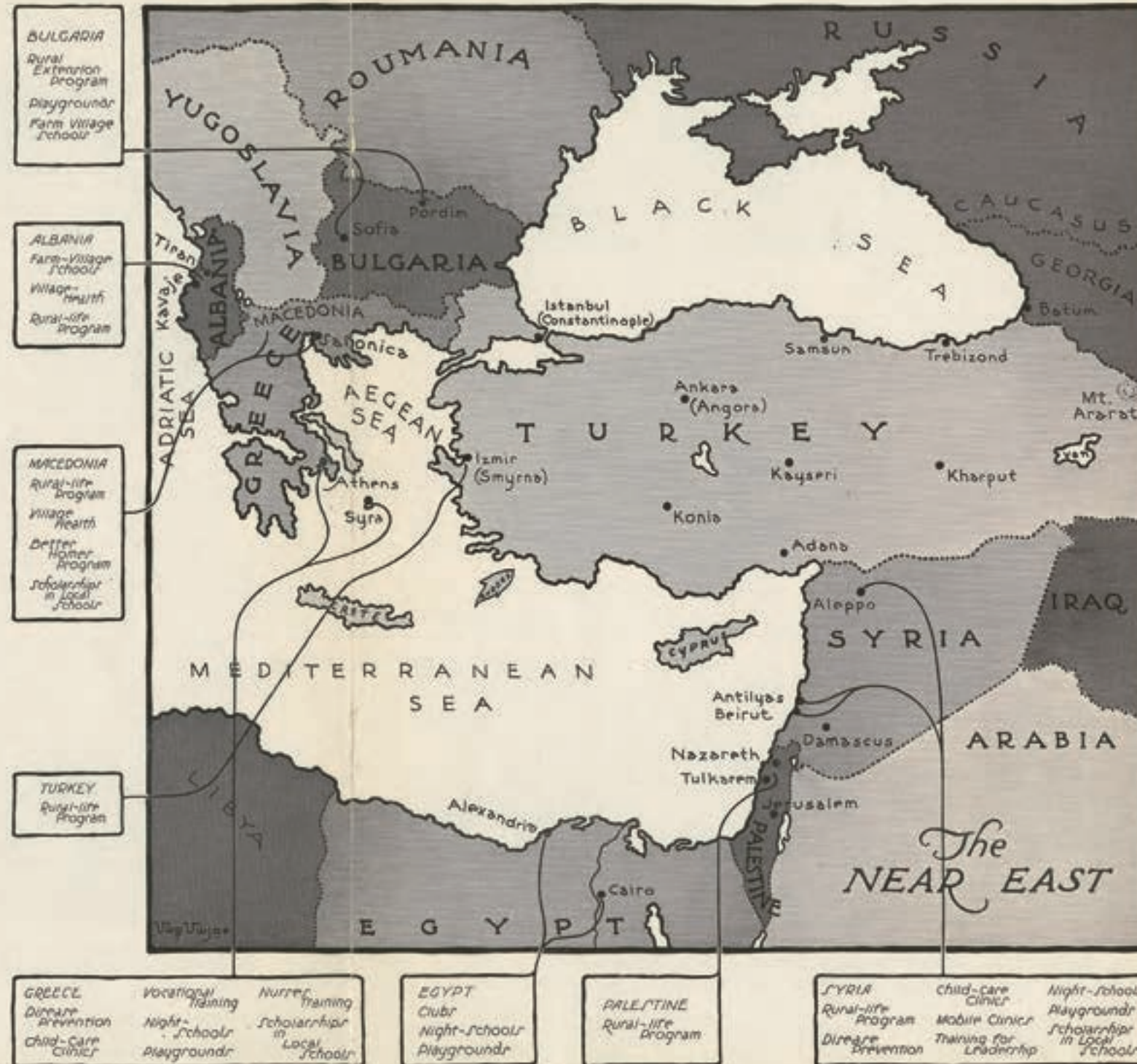
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*James D. Bartruff*  
Vice-President



A map of NEF projects, 1931. NEF's initial work was guided by the 1927 survey and directed towards communities that hosted large numbers of former orphans and refugees.



## URBAN PROGRAMS

While NEF focused considerable attention on its new rural reconstruction efforts, it also developed and maintained urban programs, some of which had grown out of its work with orphans.



### **Youth Welfare Centers & Children's Clubs**

The Youth Welfare Centers in Athens were created to help young girls and boys who had graduated from NER orphanages adjust to independent life. Most had no family support. Some were between the ages of ten and fifteen years old. All worked to support themselves, and the majority required support to address the challenges of employment, health, and everyday living. A small fraction received cash aid from NEF. At the Youth Welfare Centers, young workers could learn skills to increase their earning power, attend organized lectures and entertainment, play games, and socialize. The program grew to include seaside summer camps for working youth, and the Welfare Centers were replicated in Piraeus, Patras, Salonika, and Volos. By 1934, the Greek government had begun overseeing the Centers, while NEF provided staff support. NEF employee Nausica Parapantakis eventually became the Director of the Working Girls Centers for the Ministry of Welfare. Government ministries routinely looked to NEF's staff as advisors on welfare and recreation.

In Palestine, NEF created a new "Children's Club" for Arab working boys who had "looked on wistfully" at the activities organized for former NER orphans. The boys—most of whom were homeless orphans themselves—were given a bed, three meals, and provided with basic teaching in the "three Rs," recreation, and other topics in exchange for a small daily fee. Similar clubs operated in Cairo and Alexandria, Egypt for former NER orphans in those cities.

NEF introduced night schools for the first time in the region with hope that additional training for young workers would "pry open the doors of opportunity" to help them earn a living. NEF was overwhelmed by the demand. In 1930–31 NEF's 12 night schools served 1,700 boys and girls in Greece and an additional 350 in Syria. Refugees studied the languages of their new homelands. Girls learned homemaking skills in addition to trades.

**Nausica Parapantakis, Director of the Youth Welfare Center in Athens, speaks with Constantina Rigopoulou, age 12. Rigopoulou worked as a maid from the age of nine, when she was sent to Athens from her home in the provinces. Athens, Greece, c. 1930s.**

“The clubs ... fill a great need, as they not only offer an opportunity for the boys to obtain education, fitting them for better jobs, but also given them a home-like place to gather evenings for games and other amusements, which keep them off the streets and away from hell holes on all sides in the city.”

— The Rockefeller Foundation’s Daniel Wright describing the Children’s Clubs in Palestine and Egypt (quoted in NEF Report of Overseas Programs for 1931)



### Playgrounds & Recreation

NEF also established some of the first playgrounds and recreation centers in the Balkans. The Kaisariani Community Field and Playground opened in 1930—the first of its kind in Greece. The Field was designed to provide an urban community of 30,000 refugees from Turkey medical attention to treat and prevent tuberculosis and opportunities for “recreation to bring their badly housed children to health and to build up their own courage.”<sup>15</sup>

The Community Field was the inspiration of NEF staff member Christopher Thurber with encouragement and financial support of a private benefactor, Albert A. Hyde, of Wichita, Kansas. Sadly, Thurber died before the field opened. NEF’s Demetrios Lezos, a refugee from Turkey, served as the playground director. He was sent to the United States to study under the National Recreation Association, and became an authority on the operation of playgrounds and recreational facilities in Greece.

The Community Field was intended as a demonstration of the benefits of family recreation. It was used by thousands of children, including working youth, and adults each year. Services such as supplemental feeding, medical care, and leadership training were coupled with recreation activities. NEF’s Director of Public Health, Alice Carr, established the program to diagnose and treat tuberculosis at the Center. Generations of Athenians used the field and playground.

During World War II, NEF operated a child feeding station inside the community building, while the Axis forces commandeered playground for drilling exercises. Tragically, the Nazis used the field to carry out mass executions. After Occupation, it became a British detention camp for wayward British troops.<sup>16</sup>



A group of girls at the Youth Welfare Center in Athens. The girls had performed in a play and a dance to celebrate Greek Independence. Athens, Greece, c. 1930s.





But NEF and the Kaisariani community did not give up on the Community Field and Playground. Funding from the Marshall Plan was used to restore some of the worst damage and, in 1949, with the continued support of the Hyde family, NEF completed the restoration and reopened the Field. This returned a vital resource to the community. The following year, more than 24,000 Athenians utilized the facilities and associated services.

NEF and the Hyde family continued to support the program for years. Thirty years after the playground was created, Demetrios Lezos remained the playground's director. The Hyde Family continued to support maintenance at the playground into the 1970s.

**The Hyde Playground in  
the Kaisariani District of  
Athens, c. 1949.**

The health and welfare program in Sofia, Bulgaria's Koniovitsa District combined a playground, health and welfare demonstrations, training, and tuberculosis treatment and prevention work. This infographic appeared in NEF's 1938-1939 Annual Report.

NEF created similar playgrounds as part of a community development program in Sofia, Bulgaria, beginning in 1930. The playgrounds and children's clubs were part of a larger community welfare program in the Koniovitsa District of Sofia. The Sofia program, which also created Bulgaria's first "Children's Club," combined recreation and physical development with "moral and mental education" of children through lectures, poetry readings, children's performances, and excursions to the surrounding hills. Children learned first aid, hygiene, and other skills. By 1935, there were fifty playgrounds in Bulgaria modeled after the one created by NEF. NEF trained hundreds of playground leaders to meet the demand of this burgeoning movement.





## FARMERS, TEACHERS & PRIESTS: PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION

NEF often worked in partnership with existing institutions to identify and meet community needs. In Syria, NEF established the Rural Life Institute with the American University at Beirut (AUB) and the Antilyas School with the Armenian Church. It also established a Rural Life Institute in Turkey in partnership with the International College in Izmir. It bolstered existing schools in Bulgaria (the Pordim Folk School) and Albania (the Albanian-American Institute) to offer practical training in agriculture, health, child care, children's education, and home economics. The Rural Life Institute at AUB and the Antilyas School continue to operate in their modern iterations today.

**NEF programs introduced modern farming practices and machinery, such as this tractor. Local partners were taught how to use the equipment to increase productivity. They also learned to maintain it. Photo date and location unknown.**



### **The Antilyas School**

The genocide had left the Armenian people dislocated and largely bereft of their religious leaders and teachers—many of whom had been targeted for execution. The institutions that trained clergy had been abandoned to the Turks. NEF partnered with the exiled leader of the Armenian Church, Catholicos Sahak II Khabyan, to convert the Antilyas Orphanage in Syria (now Lebanon) into a religious training school.

The **Antilyas School** opened in 1930, to serve as a theological seminary and teacher training school. Under the five-year arrangement, the Armenian Church rented the former orphanage for \$1 per year. NEF donated two-thirds of the operating budget for the school, which operated under the administration of the church. While NEF remained committed to its non-sectarian identity, its leadership viewed this investment as justifiable as a means to provide Armenian leadership to the Armenian people in their new homelands.<sup>17</sup>

Many students were former NER orphans. Each student committed to three years of post-graduation service to needy Armenian communities. At the end of the arrangement, NEF sold the school property to the Armenian Church. Today, the school lives on as the Armenian Theological Seminary.



### **Rural Life Institutes & Farm Schools**

One of the most successful instances of NEF cooperation with a local institution came in the form of the Rural Life Institute. NEF created the Rural Life Institute with the AUB in 1931 to demonstrate improved farming practices and to train farmers. A second Institute was developed in cooperation with International College in Izmir, Turkey. Each was “expected to become a radiating center of useful influence in improving village life.”<sup>18</sup>

The Rural Life Institutes were informed by the system of agricultural education and cooperative extension developing in the United States. Two NEF staff, J. Forrest Crawford and Ralph Allee, who would direct the Rural Life Institutes in Beirut and Izmir, respectively, were sent on a study tour through the southern United States to view the American extension system first hand.



**Syria.** With the AUB, NEF created the **Rural Life Institute** in what was then Syria. The Institute sought to develop practices suitable to local agricultural conditions, while also creating a path for broader rural education. It began by developing related practical research and extension programs. Its extension program was the first agricultural project to receive funding from the U.S. Department of State.<sup>19</sup>

Village schoolmasters enrolled in a one-year practical teacher-training course in Tulkarem, Palestine, c. 1931.

In the first year, NEF leased a large farm at Talabaya as a site for experimental farming, to both observe and study the traditional techniques of tenant farmers and also to experiment with new practices. The farm would also provided a location for short courses attended by student farmers. There they would learn



**Near East Relief's Beirut medical team, 1925. NEF built upon NER's experience to expand access to medical care and improve public health for refugee and local communities alike.**

various farming practices and sanitation.

Halim Najjar directed the Talabaya farm and he was a driving force behind the success of the Rural Life Institute. Najjar, who had attended the University of California, was trained as an agricultural engineer. With his leadership, the Institute worked with the Ministry of Education to align teaching in village schools with practical needs of farmers.

Najjar organized the first farm cooperative in Syria in 1936. The cooperative at Abadiyeh (located in what is now Lebanon) included fruit growers who crat-

ed and marketed their fruits and vegetables together. By 1938, the cooperative was able to command prices at 25 percent above market. The government collaborated with Najjar to study the possibility of general legislation to encourage cooperatives; the law was ultimately passed in 1941. The Abadiyeh cooperative continued to operate for many years and was a model for other cooperatives in the region. When Lebanon gained independence, Najjar became the Director General of the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Rural Life Institute's educational programs reached beyond Syria, as well. There were few sources of information for farmers in Palestine. NEF operated a village teacher-training program to school teachers in agricultural practices and skills. Trained teachers returned to their villages to share learning on improved practices and with the equipment and seeds necessary to produce a demonstration garden. Afif Tannous, a Syrian honors graduate of the American University of Beirut, directed the teacher training school. He later became a rural sociologist and a member of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations.

In 1934, AUB gifted eighteen cedars of Lebanon to the American people in appreciation of NER and NEF's relief and reconstruction work and the sympathy of the American people. The trees were planted at Arlington Cemetery, where first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, acting on behalf of the President, accepted them in a ceremony on March 31, 1934.

The work of the Rural Life Institute expanded in the wake of World War II. In 1944, NEF and the Institute initiated full community development programs in Chtaura and elsewhere, with activities designed to improve agriculture, health, recreation, and home welfare. Souad Ajlani, a member of NEF program's home economics extension team, attended the University of Tennessee and obtained her bachelor's degree. She returned to Syria and played an important role in the country's rural extension work.

In 1952, the Rural Life Institute became the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences (FAFS) at AUB. NEF continued its partnership with AUB, helping to recruit faculty and researchers and supporting research through grants to the University until the mid-1980s.

**Turkey.** A second Rural Life Institute was created in Turkey. Known as the **Anatolia Institute**, it had a relatively short life. The project was directed by Ralph



**Threshing wheat in Turkey, c. 1934. NEF partnered with the International College in Izmir to develop a Rural Life Institute in Turkey. The effort had some successes in training local sanitation workers, but was short-lived.**

Allee, who had taught for four years at the International College in Izmir. A Turkish student was sent to Cornell University, and another studied sanitation in the Rockefeller Foundation's program in Athens. While the program saw some success, a cornerstone of NEF's work was cooperation with the local government to ensure the work would carry on. NEF was unable to develop this relationship with the Turkish government. It discontinued its work in Turkey and transferred its staff from the country in 1935.



**Albania.** In Albania, NEF operated two schools at Kavaje under the umbrella of the **Albanian-American Institute**, a farm school and teacher training school. NEF expected the Albanian-American institute to “eventually class with the Beirut and Anatolia [Rural Life] Institutes.”<sup>20</sup> In 1931, NEF entered a 20-year contract with the government of Albania to develop the boys and girls schools.

At the farm school, which served boys, students were selected by NEF staff from the villages, using criteria to ensure that those who were educated returned to share learning with villages, rather than “trend toward the city or a government job.”<sup>21</sup> The school was constructed in a “farm village” model, with boys living and working in small groups in cottages.

Young women in the teacher training program were taught improved poultry and gardening practices. They were encouraged to work with village mothers and youth and even signed agreements committing to village or community work after graduation. NEF’s Meverette Smith directed the teacher training school. She herself operated a team and hand plow to demonstrate to the students that there was dignity in hard manual labor.

The program in Albania also would address public health and welfare, particularly among women. At the outset, malaria rates were very high, few schools existed, and those that did were not for girls. There was one doctor in the area. Under church law, he could not treat women. Illiteracy among women was 100 percent.

The Institute had “from the start very clearly conceived Zones of Influence.” These were primarily through activities on its grounds with students and faculty and secondarily by the more incidental sharing of lessons and demonstration to the school’s neighbors.

After the Rural Life Institute in Turkey closed, Ralph Allee was transferred to Albania as director. He remained at that post until the Italians annexed Albania in 1939 and the Albanian-American Institute reverted to the state.

In 1939, King Zog I of Albania awarded the Order of Skanderbeg to NEF staff Edward C. Miller (NEF Executive Secretary), Laird Archer (Foreign Director), and Ralph Allee (Director of NEF’s Rural Life School at Kavaje) for their work in Albanian schools and projects.

**Bulgaria.** The **Pordim Folk School** was the inspiration of missionaries Edward and Elizabeth Haskell, who raised the initial funds. The school opened with 16 students in December 1929. NEF assumed responsibility for the administration



in 1931, retaining the Haskells as NEF employees. Under the direction of Clayton E. Whipple (the NEF Overseas Director of Rural Education), the school became a paragon of extension education.

Students—most of whom were young women—received a theoretical and practical education. They lived in cottages where they practiced cooking and housekeeping, learned “mothercraft” in a nursery for local children, and trained as preschool teachers. They also spent time sewing, embroidering, knitting, and working in the garden, dairy, stable, and chicken coop. There were progressive courses in child psychology, home hygiene, and practical accounting for homemakers. Boys learned modern farming techniques and disease prevention. The curriculum emphasized Bulgarian history and culture, including public speaking, songs, and storytelling. Soon, the program was expanded to include an extension program in the villages adjacent to Pordim.

While the school aimed to raise the overall standard of living for rural Bul-

garians by educating young people, it awarded no diplomas. The administrators feared that a degree would encourage students to move to the cities, defeating the school’s purpose. With no formal certificate, the “graduates” were more likely to return to their home villages to share their new knowledge with other rural Bulgarians. By December 1933, the school had educated 64 young men and 116 young women from 49 villages.

Unfortunately, the rise of the Pordim Folk School coincided with the Great Depression in the United States. NEF accelerated the transfer of the school to the Bulgarian government, and the Bulgarian Department of Agriculture assumed management of the school in 1934 and maintained the extension program. NEF continued its involvement in an advisory capacity and also solicited several large donations.

In 1934, the government of Bulgaria awarded Dr. Edward Haskell the Commanders Cross of the Order of Civic Merit, Third Degree and Elizabeth Haskell the Dames Cross of the Order of Civic Merit, Second Degree.

Children plant trees on drained swamp ground with Annie Slack in honor of the Washington Bicentennial. Syria, 1930. The swamp was drained to eliminate malaria-carrying mosquitoes.



#### TAKING CARE: HEALTH & WELFARE WORK

With 132,000 orphans in its care, NER necessarily engaged in health and hygiene activities. The Near East Survey emphasized the limited number of physicians, nurses, and hospital beds available to the general public and called for nurse training that would be available to non-orphans.<sup>22</sup> Given the pressing need and building upon earlier experience, these fields became an integral part of NEF's reconstruction and development programs.



#### **Village Betterment in Syria**

Armenian refugees exiled from Turkey lived in squalid and overcrowded camps in northern Syria for nearly 10 years. In the early 1930s, with charity from abroad and land donated by the Syrian government, the refugees were being established in resettlement villages—offering them the chance of a home once again. But conditions in the villages were tremendously difficult and disease was rampant.

NEF nurse Annie Slack developed a mobile health clinic that administered

medical aid to the refugees. By 1932, in response to requests from the League of Nations and several native Arab villages, NEF expanded the program to a total of nine villages; people from twelve additional villages traveled to visit the health clinics. Slack and her five nurse assistants (three of whom were former NER orphans) treated more than 1,400 people in the clinic, made hundreds of home visits, and examined hundreds of children in schools. A handful of doctors made occasional visits to the villages. The nurse assistants lived in homes in different villages, with the house acting as a demonstration site and also a clinic.

In addition to providing medical attention, Slack planned sanitation and water projects to reduce the rates of malaria and improve access to clean water, she opened a day nursery in one village during the labor-intensive months of summer, and opened the first primitive playgrounds and recreation fields the area. Finally, Slack offered classes on child care for both mothers and older children who cared for younger siblings while their mothers were in the fields.

Later, this work would be continued as a health and home demonstration program, led by a Syrian nurse and doctor with the support of student volunteers from the American University of Beirut. The work benefitted both Armenian and Arab residents of the area.

From left, mothers and children at Nashabeyeh Home and Family Welfare Center; children at the day nursery with NEF Home Welfare Supervisor Josephine Vogt (second adult from right) and an assistant; Bedouin and village mothers wait to ask welfare worker Zaida Kurd Ali, who was trained as a practical nurse, for advice and medical treatment. Syria, 1933.



### **Battling Malaria in Marathon**

Annie Slack distributes quinine solution candy to children, with the wheels of her mobile clinic visible at left. Syria, 1930. Slack provided the only source of medical care to hundreds of resettled refugees and native residents.

In 1934, NEF began work to combat malaria in the Marathon Plain. Under Alice Carr's leadership and in cooperation with the Greek government, the program applied the methods of the day—draining swamps and spreading oil on water that could not be drained. The rate of infection declined from 42 to 20 percent in the first year.

Carr sought to solidify these gains through projects to increase family income.



## Alice Carr

**Alice Griffith Carr** dedicated her life to improving public health in Greece and the Near East after leaving a career in teaching to attend nursing school. She travelled to France as one of the first Red Cross nurses, serving in World War I. She went on to work with the Red Cross in Europe and the Near East. In 1923, while stationed in Greece, she joined the NER staff. She



successfully combatted malaria at the orphanages in Corinth and saved the lives of 600 NER orphans when a dengue fever epidemic swept through Athens in 1928.

Carr became the NEF Director of Public Health in Greece in 1930. She gained international recognition for her tireless work fighting typhus, malaria, and tuberculosis. Carr created educational programs for refugee women as a means of disease prevention and established child wel-

fare centers and medical clinics. Carr received a gold medal from the Greek Department of Health and the Silver Cross of the Order of the Phoenix in 1934 in recognition of her service to the Greek people.

Carr helped to launch NEF's rural clinic in Marathon, Greece in 1943. The clinic was a cooperative health project with the Greek government from the outset; it was the first program of its kind. Her meticulous written

reports on rural medical cooperatives, village rehabilitation, public health, sanitation, and disease control were vital to the creation of NEF's programs in other countries.

The German army expelled all Americans from Greece in 1941. Carr travelled to New York City to assume the role of Public Health Advisor for NEF and lecture on behalf of the organization. Alice Carr retired in 1948, after 25 years with NEF. She died in 1968.

NEF introduced spinning wheels, which were far more efficient than hand spinning, and taught women to raise silk worms. Women were encouraged to use their income to purchase materials and screens necessary to prevent malaria.

After four years, Marathon Plain households reported an 82 percent increase in income. A portion of this increase resulted from the women's new enterprises. But most was attributable the improved health among village farmers, who were able to work consistently and without hiring additional labor to fill in for bedridden

family members. By working with village women to create income and use earnings to protect village families from disease, the project had created a sustainable and significant change. Eventually, the Marathon program became a training site for students from the Greek School of Nursing and the National School of Hygiene.



### Addressing Special Needs

In 1930, when NEF took over the NER programs, it inherited a small program serving a handful of deaf orphans in Greece. There was no state school available to deaf students in the Balkans. With the Greek government, NEF turned the program into a national demonstration. NEF sent a teacher, Chryssoula Kyriakides, on scholarship to the Clark School for the Deaf in Massachusetts. Michael Michaelides-Scurso, NEF's social welfare counselor and an honors law school graduate, helped to establish the school as the National Institute for the Deaf. He also served as its manager and an NEF advisor to the Ministry of Public Welfare. By 1937, the school had moved into a building erected by the Ministry of Public Welfare—housing 100 students and serving 120 day students.

Following the Balkan Congress on the Child in 1935, NEF and other organizations in Greece gave additional consideration to the needs of children with disabilities. An Athens survey indicated that most had no education and many had never seen a doctor. In February 1938, NEF created the first therapy center and school for children with disabilities in the Near East. It was intended as a demonstration program for assisting children disabled by polio and other disease.

NEF provided an American physical therapist, Katharine Lorrilliere, who helped establish this first “Center for Crippled Children” and who trained several Greek assistants. A Greek nurse, Philomela Mavridou, was sent to study physical therapy at Harvard Medical School. Children at the Center participated in physical therapy, group play and recreation, schooling, and instruction in handicraft, toy-making, and knitting. In cooperation with the Patriotic Foundation of Greece, NEF developed and operated a summer camp for ninety children in the seaside town of Voula. Lorrilliere contracted a rare infection at the summer camp in 1939 and, sadly, succumbed to it after a brief illness. Mavridou eventually became the director of the Center and continued its efforts during and after World War II.

Opposite: Nurse Alice Carr (back row, right) at her Marathon Health Clinic. Carr worked to treat and prevent malaria in the Marathon region with great results. Greece, c. 1935-1940.







## CHAPTER 4

### **World War II: Relief & Reconstruction (1940–1950)**

The arrival of World War II disrupted most of NEF's reconstruction work in Greece and drew the organization into relief work once again.

## WAR RELIEF

NEF converted its operations into soup kitchens, dispensaries, and clothing centers, and its staff offered their services to the Greek government. NEF nurses reported to Salonika and were assigned work in emergency hospitals. Meverette Smith collected clothes and supplies for Salonika hospitals until the city fell to Germany, when she traveled to Athens to continue efforts there. NEF's Amalia Lycourezou helped to organize the first hospital train in Greece.

NEF sought to meet relief needs and to offer Greek women an opportunity to earn money while their husbands, sons, and brothers served. NEF employed women to make bandages to supply hospitals and the front. Nearly 2,000 women were employed to make clothes, with most knitting or sewing at home and others working in workshops in Athens and Salonika. These operations were supervised by NEF, with material donations from the Greek War Relief, the Hellenic Red Cross, and others. The Near East Industries workshop became the “pivot of the planning and the channel of supply,” and its sales room was converted into a workshop. Women plead desperately to participate; NEF was forced to turn away “mobs.”

Overcoming dire shortages and transportation limitations, the enterprises produced nearly 330,000 garments and more than 819,000 bandages between November 1940 and July 1941. These figures included civilian clothes produced in NEF workshops for Greek soldiers returning from the front after Germany defeated the Greek Army in April 1941. Many had walked to Athens and possessed only the clothing on their backs. A Nazi order barred uniformed Greek soldiers from city streets. If spotted in uniform, the Greek soldiers risked being shot or forced into Nazi labor battalions. With the cooperation of the Greek authorities, NEF staff, led by Meverette Smith, distributed civilian clothing to 15,000 young men.

All told, between the start of the war in 1940 and July 1941, NEF relief efforts reached an estimated 15,000 people each month.

**Previous pages:** Antonio Pantoulas, a Greek farmer who lost both of his arms and his sight when he stepped on a landmine in 1947, works at an adapted loom constructed for his use. Pantoulas came to the NEF center in 1954, where he received therapy and prosthetic limbs. He was trained to use the loom pictured here to make a living and, when his rehabilitation was complete, he and the loom returned to his village. Athens, Greece, c. 1955.  
**Below:** Greek boys and girls wait in line at a NEF child feeding center in Athens. They hold dishes tied in cloth and wave ration cards. Athens, Greece, c. 1945.





## Amalia Lycourezou

**Amalia Lycourezou** was the daughter of a former Greek Minister of Justice. She volunteered as a Red Cross nurse during the Greco-Turkish war, served as a special secretary of philanthropic work to Queen Sophia, and then traveled to the United States on a NEF scholarship in 1938. She spent a year studying settlement houses and social services organizations in major American cities. Lycourezou returned to Athens in 1939 to assume leadership of the Working Girls' Center.

Lycourezou became the director for the Working Girls' Welfare Centers and by 1940, was overseeing centers that served more than 4,400 girls in Athens, Piraeus, Salonika, and Oropos. She supervised the construction of two new girls' centers in Athens and one in Kavalla. The centers offered much more than just a safe place to stay. Lycourezou and her staff ensured that their young charges had access to recreational activities, quality health care, night classes, and employ-



ment services. The Working Girls' Centers flourished under Lycourezou's leadership and the Greek government sought her advice on social services.

When World War II began, Lycourezou left the Working Girls' Center to organize Greece's first hospital train, which provided emergency medical care in war torn areas. After the Americans were forced to leave in 1941, Lycourezou took over the NEF Fatherless Chil-

dren of the War project. It provided funds, clothing, and medical care to augment the meager supplies available at public soup kitchens. In 1942, Lycourezou traveled to Piraeus to supervise a Lend-Lease program that provided milk to 17,600 Greek children under the age of three.

When NEF staff returned to Greece after the war, Lycourezou helped to organize the "Paedopolis" or children's villages for orphans. Amalia Lycourezou directed that program on loan to the Queen's Fund until 1951, when she left NEF and married Swiss diplomat Franco Brenni.



### **American Evacuation & The Hellenic Near East Foundation**

American staff stayed in Greece until the last moment; most departed at the end of July 1941 with some difficulty — nearly four months after the Axis occupation began. Before leaving, Laird Archer, NEF's Foreign Director based in Athens, es-

## Meverette Smith

### Physical education

instructor Meverette Smith of Haydensville, Massachusetts, joined NEF as an instructor at the Girls' Normal School in Kavaje, Albania in 1930. At the request of the Albanian Ministry of

Education, Smith developed a rigorous home economics course. The students learned traditional cooking, farming techniques (including beekeeping and silk worm culture), weaving, and sewing. They also learned to care for children and the elderly.

In 1936, Meverette Smith transferred to Salonika, Greece as the Director of Home Welfare for the Macedonia program. Smith oversaw the network of Home Demonstration Centers, which offered extremely popular classes in disease prevention, home hygiene, and childcare. She and her staff also taught women to contribute to the household economy by growing extra produce and selling handicrafts. The project achieved significant reductions in disease and infant mortality, as well as a measurable improvement in the standard of living in refugee communities.

When World War II reached Greece, Smith and her staff offered their expertise to the Governor General in Salonika. Three of Smith's nurses took



charge of emergency hospitals, where there was a serious nursing shortage. Smith and her team of home economists gathered warm clothing and hospital supplies. The women worked under constant air raid fire.

Smith took to carrying the project accounts (and a jackknife) with her for fear that the building housing the office would be destroyed while she was out.

When the Nazis entered Salonika, NEF Foreign Director Laird Archer urged Smith to leave the city. She and her staff were among the last people to cross the Vardar River before the last bridge blew up. Smith wasted no time in establishing a clothing production workshop in the Kaisariani District of Athens. She was one of the last Americans to leave Greece in July 1941.

During the war, Smith used her time in the United States to take graduate courses at Cornell University and earn a B.A. in education from Clark University. She rejoined NEF as the Director of Home Welfare for Syria and Lebanon in 1943 and worked with nurse Emilie Willms and Dr. Ruth Parmelee. In 1944, Smith transferred to Cairo as a NEF consultant to the UNRRA Welfare Division. She returned to work for NEF, where she remained on staff until her retirement in 1948.

**Meverette Smith and NEF staff prepare to sail to the Middle East to work with refugees of World War II. From left to right, Margaret Florea, Emilie Willms, Meverette Smith, Frank Anthony, Penelope Kalergis, and Ruth Parmelee. New York, 1944.**



## Elizabeth Mayston

**Elizabeth Mayston**, of Hoboken, New Jersey, lived and worked overseas for most of her life. Her career included active relief work during both World Wars. In 1918, Mayston joined the Young Women's Christian Association and was stationed in France, where she directed welfare centers for women working in munitions manufacturing. Mayston continued to work with the YWCA in Constantinople during the turbulent period of 1921 to 1929. Mayston joined Near East Relief in 1929.

When NEF was created in 1930, Mayston became assistant to Foreign Director Laird Archer. She was a key member of the Athens staff and a trusted colleague. Mayston had worked in the field for a long time, and her knowledge of Greece and Turkey was indispensable.

Although Mayston occasionally traveled



to the United States, she looked upon Greece as her home. She lived with her Greek companion, Eunice Panoussis, whom she looked upon as a daughter. Mayston chose to remain in Greece when the German army invaded. When the specter of famine loomed over the country, Mayston opened a soup kitchen in Athens that fed more than 800 Greek women and children. She was later imprisoned by the

Italian Fascist government for her relief work. Mayston developed severe arthritis as a result of her internment in a damp basement and the lack of access to nutritious food. Upon her release, she immediately resumed her relief work, despite her physical limitations.

Mayston rejoined NEF when Laird Archer returned to Greece in late 1944. She retired from NEF in 1948 and lived in Athens until her death in 1989.

established the "Hellenic Near East Foundation." It was a "new" agency comprised of NEF's Greek personnel and chartered under Greek law. Archer helped secret away funds to support the Hellenic branch's work. NEF's New York leadership maintained periodic contact with the Hellenic NEF staff through Swiss diplomatic channels, but the Hellenic branch autonomously continued NEF's work during the war.

Fifty Hellenic staff and a handful of Americans heroically carried on under nearly impossible conditions of scarcity and scrutiny. They endured the war's calamitous impacts on their own families and homes. They were malnourished,



NEF cared for children with disabilities caused by disease and warfare, providing physical therapy, opportunities for play, and schooling. Athens, c. 1945. The Center was transferred to the Hellenic Society for Crippled Children in 1948, and NEF continued to play an advisory role.

threadbare, and exhausted. Some walked for miles each day to reach their work. There were frequent visits by occupying Gestapo and Nazi officers. Several staff were imprisoned.

In spite of these trials, the Hellenic NEF team not only delivered relief but “actually advanced and improved the techniques of the permanent projects and in addition saved the lives of more than 12,500 children.”<sup>23</sup>

In Athens, the staff continued to operate feeding stations and distributed what clothing and goods they could find. They developed new child feeding centers that combined medical care and special feeding to children recovering from acute starvation. NEF supported thousands of children whose fathers had been killed in the war, providing subsidies, medical attention, clothing, and home care.

Building upon an existing Crippled Child Center in Athens—renamed the Child Therapy and Welfare Center to avoid arousing Nazi antipathy towards the disabled—staff provided medical treatments, food, and physical therapy. Work for children with disabilities grew to include those maimed by starvation, landmines, and warfare. The Hellenic staff also piloted work with soldiers, providing prosthetic limbs to over 2,000 soldiers and other specialized equipment, shoes, and clothing to another 3,500.

NEF worked to bring relief to hard-hit mountain villages as well. Apostolos Koskinides, a NER and NEF veteran, led efforts to improve sanitary conditions and ward off epidemics in villages crowded with war refugees.

After mountain villages were burned by German forces, nearly one hundred children were rescued from caves and placed in an NEF orphanage in the mountain village of Kefissia. The orphanage, christened the “Eagle’s Nest,” saved 384 children and reunited 315 with family relations by 1945. After the occupation ended, NEF would establish a number of additional hostels as “branches” of the Eagle’s Nest.



### **Work With War Refugees Outside of Greece**

While NEF’s Hellenic staff worked in Greece, a number of the American staff were assigned to refugee camps in Palestine and Egypt under the British Middle East Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (MERRA).

At the Nuseirat camp, near Gaza, Dr. Ruth Parmalee and Nurse Emilie Willms served as the chief medical officer and executive nurse, caring for 10,000 Greek refugees. With a small team of Greek doctors, British medical officers and nurses, and a group of refugee women trained to administer inoculations, they cared for more than 1,500 patients and inoculated the refugees against typhoid and smallpox.

In Egypt, the Moses Wells camp hosted an additional 10,000 Greek refugees. Penelope Kalergis, a Greek nurse who had trained in the United States on a NEF scholarship, was the only professionally trained nurse in camp. She organized training for 35 nurses’ aides, eight of whom were sent to help at Nuseirat. The El Shatt camp housed more than 20,000 refugees from Yugoslavia. Dr. Wilson Dodd, NEF’s Medical Advisor, served as medical director, accompanied by NEF nurse Ruth Faust and dietician Margaret Florea. They enlarged the camp’s hospital, where Faust trained 100 refugee women to serve as nurses’ aides.

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## Ruth Parmalee

**Ruth Azniv Parmelee** was born to missionary parents in Trebizond, Turkey in 1885 and graduated from Oberlin College before earning a medical degree from the University of Illinois in 1912. Dr. Parmelee applied to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) and was appointed as a medical missionary to Harput, Turkey in 1914. She is regarded as the first American woman physician to practice in the Near East.

Dr. Parmelee witnessed the Armenian Genocide in Harput. Years later, she wrote about seeing the arrest and massacre of the town's prominent Armenian men. The United States' entered World War I in 1917, resulting in the departure of all American diplomats from Ottoman Turkey. Like many other missionary workers, Dr. Parmelee chose to stay. She continued to work at the American Hospital, often traveling into the surrounding community on horseback to offer medical care.

When World War I ended, Dr. Parmelee returned to the United States for additional study. She joined NER in 1919 as a volunteer from American Women's Hospitals (AWH, now the American Medical Women's Association). Dr. Parmelee returned to Harput as Assistant Director of the NER Hospital. She cared for a large refugee community, including 3,000 orphans. She dedicated countless hours to educating women about maternal and child health. Dr. Parmelee spoke fluent Armenian, French, Greek, and Turkish, and her language skills were invaluable to the diverse refugee community.

Dr. Parmelee returned to American Women's Hospitals in 1922. She was stationed in Greece, where she set up a tent hospital on the beach in Macedonia to care for refugees from the Smyrna disaster. Recognizing the demand for medical professionals, Dr. Parmelee opened the AWH School of Nursing in Salonika in 1923. Two years later, the hospital was turned over to the Greek government. Dr. Parmelee opened a new school in Kokkinia, Greece, where she taught until 1934. She worked closely with NEF nurse Emilie Willms, who was superintendent of the hospital. Dr. Parmelee served as the director of all American Women's Hospitals health services in Greece from 1928 to 1941. She simultaneously served as a medical adviser for NEF's work in Albania. She returned to the United States in 1941 during the Nazi-Fascist occupation of Greece. She earned a Master's of Public Health from Harvard University during that time.

In 1943, Dr. Parmelee became NEF's Overseas Director of Maternal and Child Health. She arrived in Cairo in December 1943 and was appointed to the Nuseirat Refugee Camp in Gaza, Palestine. When her contract in Nuseirat ended in 1946, Dr. Parmelee was assigned to the *IMERRA*, a medical relief boat that tended to the people of the Aegean islands. She later spent time in Athens as Medical Adviser and Director of the NEF School of Physical Therapy, and then she taught at Pierce College in Elleniko, Greece until 1953. Dr. Parmelee died in Concord, New Hampshire at the age of 88 in 1973.





## RECONSTRUCTION PLANNING

The UNRRA hospital ship *IMERRA* at its commissioning in the Port of Piraeus, January 3, 1945. NEF medical staff Emilie Willms, Ruth Parmalee, and Martha Crawford delivered medical relief and aid to islanders in the Aegean Sea from the ship.



During the war and occupation, NEF staff in New York focused on post-war reconstruction planning. NEF took an active role in two coalitions created to coordinate work among voluntary organizations: the Coordinating Committee of American Organizations Interested in the Reconstruction of Greece and the American Council of Private Agencies for Foreign Service. NEF made reports on conditions in Greece and plans for rehabilitation.<sup>24</sup> These plans helped to shape reconstruction efforts when the occupation was lifted.

After Axis forces withdrew, NEF staff and advisors took important leadership

roles in reconstruction. Laird Archer, on leave from his position as NEF Foreign Director, was the Chief of the American Mission to Greece and Albania for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). UNRRA was created to plan and administer relief to war-affected areas. Dr. Lincoln Kelsey, a NEF agricultural advisor and former NER employee, took leave from Cornell University to work as the Mission Chief of the Agricultural Section. Dr. Parmalee and Emilie Willms were reassigned from the Nuseirat Refugee Camp to an UNRRA “mercy ship,” the *IMERRA*, which would bring supplies and medical attention to Greeks in the Cyclades who suffered mightily as a result of the occupation. Meverette Smith served as a key consultant to UNRRA’s Welfare Division. NEF’s Hellenic branch staff helped make connections between UNRRA and Greek ministries and implemented activities in Athens.



## Laird Archer



**Laird Archer** began his career at the age of 18 as a journalist for the Wichita Beacon. He worked his way up to Sunday editor, taking a leave of absence to volunteer with the War Work Council in France. Archer became the personal secretary to Kansas Governor Henry J. Allen, owner of the Wichita Beacon and a prominent NER supporter. Archer participated in a League of Nations survey of the Assyrian population in Persia in 1922 and joined NER the same year. His first assignment was a survey of living conditions in Turkey, the Caucasus, Persia, Syria, and Palestine. He was offered the position of Foreign Secretary in 1923. Archer held this New York City-based position until 1930, when he was appointed Foreign Director and moved to Athens.

When the Italian Army invaded Greece in 1940, Archer served on the Greek War Relief Association's administrative committee. A year later, the German Army closed the Greek consulate in Athens based on America's entry into the war. The Nazis ordered the American Legation to leave Greece, but granted no exit papers. With help from the embassy in Rome, American citizens managed to leave in small groups each week. The Archers, along with Meverette Smith, departed on July 28, 1941. Once in Rome, Archer worked with

embassy staff to ensure forty-four remaining Americans were able to leave Athens.

Laird Archer returned to America in 1941 and wrote *Balkan Journal*, a book about his experiences in Greece.

Soon, Archer's attention turned to post-war reconstruction. NEF granted him a leave of absence to work as the chief of the U.S. Office of Foreign Re-

lief and Rehabilitation in Cairo. A few months later, he was selected to serve as chief of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) mission to Greece and Albania. He arrived in Greece in October 1944, only ten days after the German Army departed. Archer resumed his duties as NEF Foreign Director in Athens in 1945. He helped to create relief and rehabilitation programs for the many Greeks that had suffered profoundly during the war.

In his thirty-year career with NEF, Laird Archer left an impression on nearly every aspect of the organization. He received the Grand Commander of the Order of the Phoenix and the Commander of the Order of the Redeemer awards from the Greek government for his great service to that country and also received the Order of Scanderberg from the government of Albania. During his retirement, Archer lectured extensively and published a second book, *Balkan Tragedy*, in 1977. Laird Archer died in 1981 at the age of 88.



A map showing the villages burned by the Nazis and the location of NEF's hostels, which were modeled after the first Eagle's Nest Hostel in Kifissia.

## POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION & RELIEF

Liberated Greece was in ruins. More than 1,500 villages were destroyed, many burned in massacres by the Axis occupiers. Communities had been rendered homeless. Many children were fatherless or orphaned. Without adequate shelter or food, survivors “barely existed, dwelling like animals in makeshift shelters in the corners of roofless homes or in caves.”<sup>25</sup> Thousands of soldiers and civilians alike were maimed by war and frostbite. Scarcity prevailed. In remote villages, people lacked access to food relief and their own food production systems had been decimated by the consumption of seeds and the confiscation and destruction of farm implements and livestock. Few work animals remained. NEF’s post-war programs spanned both emergency response and technical assistance for reconstruction.



**Child Welfare.** The Greek government sought NEF’s help for children from burned villages. NEF organized hostels modeled after the Eagle’s Nest orphanage in Kefissia. The homes provided temporary care aimed at rebuilding the children’s strength and morale. Given the widespread need, children came to the hostels on brief rotations, then returned to their villages. In 1947, NEF transferred the hostels to the Queen’s Fund, and they were renamed “Paedopolis,” or children’s villages. NEF staff were loaned to supervise the Paedopolis; NEF’s Amalia Lycourezou served as program director. In Athens, the Paedopolis children relied on the Kaisariani Field and Playground for recreation, physical education, and leadership training. Eventually the Paedopolis evolved to provide permanent care to orphaned children. At their peak, there were 52 Paedopolis serving 20,000 children.

After World War II, NEF appealed to American women to donate cloth and notions that could be made into clothes for the thousands of children being cared for at NEF hostels. The cloth was shipped to Greece where women were “hired” to sew it into simple clothes in exchange for cloth that they could use to meet their own family needs. Here, two NEF workers weigh in clothing made from donated cloth.

**Rehabilitation of Children & Adults with Disabilities.** Building on existing NEF programs, NEF, UNRRA, and the Greek government collaborated on rehabilitation centers for adults and children. The centers provided clinical and



Young men inspect their nets, Greece, c. 1950. During World War II, fishermen suffered as their boats and equipment were destroyed in Nazi air raids. During the occupation, NEF case workers helped procure nets and lease boats for Piraeus fishermen so they could continue their work.

physical support and vocational training to help patients become self-supporting. NEF also expanded its pre-war work with the blind, restoring and expanding the School for the Blind and facilitating the development of a standard Greek Braille code and Greek Braille publishing unit. The program provided Greece's only source of vocational training for the blind. Much of this work was accomplished under the expertise of Eric Boulter, NEF's director of welfare for the blind, and with the support of the American Association for Overseas Blind. In 1947, Helen Keller, on a tour for the American Foundation for Overseas Blind, inspected NEF's demonstration program in Greece for rehabilitation of the blind and reported back to the Board, noting that it was an "excellent piece of work."<sup>26</sup>

**Medical Assistance & Training.** Greece had inadequate numbers of qualified medical staff and overwhelming need. NEF reassigned nurse Emilie Willms from the *IMERRA* to reorganize and re-outfit the nurses at Elpis, the municipal hospital in Athens. When finished, Willms moved to the Children's Hospital of St. Sophia, where she organized a pediatric nurses training program and outpatient clinic. NEF helped develop a physical therapy school at its rehabilitation center in Athens. In the Aegean islands, where 315,000 people were served by two nurses, NEF opened the first island training school for nurses in Greece on Mytilene.

**Agricultural Programs & Rural Improvement.** To address the shortage of livestock, milk, and meat, NEF developed an artificial insemination program in collaboration with the Church of the Brethren of America, the Greek College of Agriculture and Ministry of Agriculture, and UNRRA. The Church of the Brethren donated six pedigreed Brown Swiss bulls from America to be bred with native cows. The project was an early activity of the Church of the Brethren's livestock committee, which would ultimately become Heifer International. NEF established a laboratory and breeding center in Macedonia in 1946. In the first year of operation, approximately 3,000 calves were born. NEF turned the project over to the Minister of Agriculture in 1950; by then 25,000 calves had been born.

NEF and UNRRA supported the Greek government in the development of agricultural extension and education. These efforts grew out of and were modeled after NEF's pre-war Macedonia Project, for which agricultural extension was a cornerstone. Basil Moussouros, a Macedonia Project veteran, directed the government's program.



## Emilie Willms

**Emilie Willms** had been a nurse for more than 25 years when she saw an advertisement for American Women's Hospitals in 1929. A few weeks later, she sailed to Greece as the Director of the AWH Nursing Division. She intended to stay for two years.

Willms' first assignment was to train Greek student nurses at the Kokkinia Hospital school. She worked closely with Dr. Ruth Parmelee, with whom she became lifelong friends. They developed a system of clinics and health stations to serve the 70,000 residents of the Kokkinia district. The facilities offered specialized services, including pre- and post-natal care, infant welfare, and ophthalmology. During this time Willms became close friends with Princess Fredericka, often serving as a personal nurse to the Princess's children.

Willms became Head of Nursing at the Children's Hospital in 1937. When the Greco-Italian War began, she heroically evacuated her young charges to a preventorium in the Penteli Mountains. Princess Fredericka herself recalled Willms from the mountains to serve as head of the Greek Red Cross. The Greek Ministry of War appointed Willms to lead the nursing division of the Seventh Military Hospital, a joint project between the Greek Red Cross and American Women's Hospitals. Willms oversaw the care of 700 wounded soldiers in a children's hospital meant to house 250 patients.

Willms was born in Bremen, Germany and was fluent in German. Shortly after the Nazis invaded Greece in April 1941, the Kommandant offered Willms the position of Head Nurse for the German army, overseeing all operations in occupied Greece, including the German army nursing corps. Willms unequivocally refused. Fearing that she was no

longer safe, she left Greece for the United States.

Willms spent two years working in Jersey City, New Jersey. In 1943, she accepted a position as NEF's Director of Nursing and traveled with Dr. Parmelee to work in Egypt and Palestine. Willms continued to take a special interest in maternal health and child welfare, which were major concerns in refugee communities with poor sanitation and limited medical supplies. In 1945, NEF loaned Willms and Parmelee to UNRRA for a project in the Cyclades. Despite Willms' hatred of sailing and chronic seasickness, the women traveled between the islands in a UNRRA sloop, the *IMERRA*, delivering supplies and medical care to refugee communities.

Willms later directed the reorganization of the nurses at the Athens municipal hospital and oversaw a nurse training program at St. Sophia's Children's Hospital.

Emilie Willms suffered a heart attack at the NEF office in April 1954. She ultimately retired to the United States, where she devoted herself to writing her memoirs. When she began to lose her sight, friends volunteered to type for her. Willms visited Greece in 1962, 1964, and 1965, but never returned there to live. She was celebrated in American and Greek newspapers as "the American Florence Nightingale." Willms received numerous decorations, including the War Service Medal and the Greek Order of the Phoenix. The Greek Red Cross also honored Willms with a special Medal of Social Service. Ethel S. Beer published Willms' unfinished manuscript as *The Greek Odyssey of an American Nurse* in 1972.

Emilie Willms died in East Orange, New Jersey in 1969.



NEF gradually reinitiated its broader rural reconstruction work, adding home welfare programs to the agricultural extension work in 1946 and rural sanitation work in 1947. In 1948, the Greek government asked NEF to supervise sanitation to avoid epidemics among 700,000 refugees of the Greek Civil War and to help restore village water and sanitary infrastructure destroyed by guerrillas. These programs were often funded jointly by NEF and UNRRA or, later, the Economic Cooperation Administration (which administered the Marshall Plan).

NEF remained in Greece until 1956. By the time it left, most of its programs had transferred to the Greek government.

Greek farmers proudly show their cows, c 1950s. World War II decimated Greece's livestock, leaving fewer than 800 cows in the country at the end of the war. NEF's artificial insemination program was designed to repopulate the country's livestock. In 1966, the Director of Extension Service in the Greek Ministry of Agriculture, George Kavouras, called NEF's work "the best present Americans gave" to Greece.



## Katherine Saliari and Marietta Papazafiropolou

**In cooperation with** the Greek government, NEF developed a three-year training program for Greek nurses at the New York Presbyterian School of Nursing. The young women would study in New York, then return to Greece and work in public health.

Katherine Saliari and Marietta Papazafiropolou were selected as the first student nurses in 1937. They had completed their studies and were ready to return home in September 1940. When Italy invaded Greece, their return plans were interrupted. The women bided their time with supplemental courses and clinical work.

Meanwhile, the war amplified Greece's need for skilled nurses. On March 6, 1941, Laird Archer sent an urgent telegram describing conditions in Athens as "appalling," with only one trained nurse for every 105 wounded. Saliari and Papazafiropolou prepared to sail on the *Zamzam* to Egypt, then make their way to Athens. The young women received a hero's sendoff from New York City, including a meeting with Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia.<sup>27</sup>

The *Zamzam* traveled in blackout conditions to avoid detection by enemy vessels. After several uneventful weeks at sea, the *Zamzam* disappeared between Brazil and South Africa and the ship was reported missing. The Germans had

torpedoed the *Zamzam* in the South Atlantic. The survivors were held captive on a German ship for more than a month before being transported to German-occupied France. There, the nurses were detained for five weeks in an internment camp near the Swiss border before they were freed.

The nurses finally reached Athens in September 1941. Saliari and Papazafiropolou were appointed instructors at the Evangelismos Hospital, where they battled typhus. Saliari later worked with children with disabilities, helped to start a tuberculosis sanatorium in the suburbs of Athens, and served as superintendent of nurses at a Greek Hospital in Egypt, where she and a group of Greek doctors started a nursing school. She moved to New York in 1953. Papazafiropolou helped organize the NEF School of Nursing on the Greek island of Mityelene. She worked for nearly 20 years for Foster Parents' Plan, Inc., an American organization in Greece. The New York nursing program continued and its graduates were important to Greece's war relief and reconstruction efforts.



A 1941 postcard from Marietta Papazafiropolou to NEF's Rose Ewald. Papazafiropolou mailed it from the last port of call before the *Zamzam* was torpedoed by a German submarine.

Young men who lost limbs to the war or remnant landmines play volleyball at NEF's rehabilitation center. Athens, Greece, 1950.





## **Rural Reconstruction & Development (1946-1979)**

From the end of World War II until the late 1970s, NEF's approach to rural development continued to evolve and expand. NEF's work influenced the shape of the major development institutions that we know today.



## IRAN

**Previous pages:** A farmer drives a team of animals pulling a thresher. Iran, c. 1950s.  
**Above:** An Iranian agricultural landscape, c. 1970.

In 1946, at the request of the Iranian government, NEF began a comprehensive rural community development program. It operated at a scale unlike any of NEF's other work—and helped solidify an approach that had far-reaching influence on the global practice of international development.

The invitation to work in Iran followed a 1943 survey of rural conditions that Dr. Harold Allen conducted at the invitation of the Iranian government. The survey confirmed that the vast majority of the nation's population was rural and liv-



## Lyle Hayden

**Lyle Hayden** grew up on a farm in Illinois. Like many early NEF leaders, he held a Ph. D in Rural Education from Cornell University. During World War II, he served as a lieutenant in the Naval Reserve. Hayden joined NEF in 1945 as the director of the newly created Iran program. He soon made a name for himself as the “shirtsleeve ambassador”—a reference to his hands-on approach to international development.

Hayden’s first assignment was in Galeh Nou, 25 miles from Tehran. With the help of a Tehran-trained assistant, Hayden created a demonstration farm and two demonstration houses. The villagers lacked reliable, clean water, which limited their ability to grow food and raise livestock. All the villages in the area vied for scarce water that flowed from nearby mountains. They had dug numerous wells, only to have them dry up within weeks. Hayden recruited an American well-driller living in Tehran and dug a deep well. When the well lasted without running dry or turning to mud, the people of Galeh Nou began to view Hayden with increased confidence.

Hayden then turned his attention to the pressing issue of malaria. Eighty-two percent of Galeh Nou’s residents tested positive for the disease. Hayden recruited villagers to work with him. They drained stagnant pools and sprayed areas to kill mosquito larvae. Within a year, the malaria rate



dropped to ten percent.

The Minister of Education was so impressed that he asked Hayden to organize programs in other villages. Hayden collaborated with Ferdoun Shaybani, who had opened a free school for children and adults in the mosque in Mamazan. Shaybani was a graduate of the American College in Tehran

and had taken correspondence courses with Cornell University. Hayden hired a group of Shaybani’s former students as teachers; the only requirement was that they could read and write. The new teachers received training in agriculture and sanitation. Students were taught to cultivate community plots in each village and became agriculture extensionists and literary instructors.

In 1949, Hayden left NEF to work with the Economic Cooperation Administration—better known as the Marshall Plan—in Paris. He published “Living Standards in Rural Iran - A Case Study” in the *Middle East Journal* to document his experiences. In 1952 Hayden returned to NEF as the Overseas Director, responsible for all programs in Greece, Syria, and Iran. Hayden oversaw NEF’s entry into Afghanistan, which grew from a pilot program to a successful ten-year operation. He was active in selecting staff for NEF’s exploratory expansion into Africa in 1956. Hayden was named Executive Director of NEF in 1958 and Chief Administrative Officer in 1961. He retired from NEF in 1965.

ing in poverty, lacked adequate access to education or support for improved agriculture, and most worked land they did not own. In addition to an approach that was “thoroughly and completely rural-conscious,” Allen advocated for immediate and “radical” change in Iran’s system of land tenure, which was still based on feudal tradition.<sup>28</sup> He was confident in the ability of rural people to productively manage landholdings.

There is a feeling in some quarters that the peasant is too ignorant to avail himself wisely of the opportunity to acquire his own private holding; that he must first be suitably educated for this greatly increased responsibility. In my opinion, to withhold action in this matter until such an ideal state is attained would be to wait for Utopia. Given the chance to purchase, under reasonable terms, his own small piece of land, the peasant will immediately rise to the occasion. He will show energy and initiative that have not been suspected. He will develop his property and take full advantage of whatever educational opportunities and agricultural assistance that are provided.<sup>29</sup>

NEF’s work in Iran began in 1946 under the direction of NEF Area Director Lyle Hayden. The initial program consisted of a five-village pilot program in the Mamazan area, on the Veramin Plain about 22 miles outside of Tehran; it quickly expanded to 35 villages.

Meanwhile, the U.S. government was developing its own programs for international development, which were informed by NEF’s work (see *infra*). In 1951, NEF received its first grant from the U.S. government’s new Point IV Program: \$50,000 to expand its rural improvement programs in the Veramin Plain. By 1953, it had received an additional \$779,000 in Point IV funding and was operating in 360 villages.

NEF remained in Iran from 1946 until the Iranian Revolution in 1979. With the support of the U.S. and Iranian governments and private donors like the Ford Foundation, it implemented wide-ranging programs with long-term impact.





NEF sought to lift rural people's educational opportunities and their earning power. It did this through agriculture, primary education, institutional development, and public health programs.

**Men learned to utilize modern equipment, including tractors. Iran, date unknown.**



Young men at the Mamazon Training Center collect seeds, c. 1957. NEF's first teacher training school began in a remodeled donkey stable in Palasht; later a permanent center was developed in the village of Mamazon.

**Agricultural Rehabilitation, Land Tenure & Rural Development.** NEF operated a demonstration farm to introduce improved agricultural techniques and to encourage adoption of modern cultivation practices. It introduced improved techniques for livestock, poultry, citrus, vegetable production, and other crops. Beyond agriculture, NEF developed short courses for construction workers to improve building practices and for village youth on the operation of machinery. It helped the Ministry of Interior Community Development Department implement a nationwide rural improvement program.

When, in 1951, the Shah began to distribute government land among farmers, NEF supported the distribution program by training the village level supervisors who would assist new landholders in their evolution from feudal tenants to landowners.

NEF created the first rural credit cooperatives in Iran. In 1952, NEF and the Ford



When NEF began working in Iran, clean water was scarce and preventable diseases were widespread. NEF helped improve access to clean water by digging wells, capping springs, and installing infrastructure. These improvements both protected against waterborne disease and reduced the risk of malaria by eliminating standing water around uncapped springs. Bottom: A woman gathers water from an irrigation channel. Top: A woman draws water from a capped spring.



Boys at a rural school and at work in their school garden, 1957. NEF helped advance primary education for rural communities by developing teacher training programs and a curriculum that offered a supply of qualified teachers and practical information.

Foundation began the program in the Veramin Area. The program was designed to facilitate smallholder farmers' access to capital so that they could improve their agricultural practices without exposure to exploitative lending practices.



Ahwaz Agricultural College in Iran's Khuzestan Province, 1964. The college included a working farm and orchard. Beginning in 1958, NEF helped to develop the College and continued to provide technical assistance and guidance for a decade. NEF helped the college to evolve into a four-year university.



NEF helped advance rural primary school education in Iran, particularly for girls. Here, girls in uniform stand outside of their school, c. 1950s.

**Rural Education.** In 1947, there were only three schools in the Veramin area. By 1956, there were 86 schools in operation with over 6,200 students enrolled—about a quarter of whom were girls. NEF developed a curriculum for village schools that was subsequently adopted by the Ministry of Education for nationwide use.

NEF established and developed the curriculum for the Mamazon and Rascht Training Centers, which provided education and training to young men who boarded at the school. The students would go on to become teachers, extension agents, and village workers.

Because there were few women teachers, few girls attended school. In 1953, NEF established a school for village women with the Iranian Ministry of Education. The Galeh Nou school trained a cadre of women teachers for village schools and also trained young women as home welfare agents and community development workers, returning them to villages to lead rural improvement programs. Additional teacher training schools for women were later opened in Ghazvin and Dezfoul.

NEF also created the first adult literacy programs in Iran. In 1955-56, there were 2,690 adults enrolled in literacy classes in the Veramin Plain. NEF had created a primer and reader for teaching literacy classes. NEF published a monthly magazine, *Veramin Life*, for newly literate adults. The magazine was subsequently published under the title *Rural Life* on a nationwide basis pursuant to a request by



the Iranian Ministry of Education. The woman behind the development of these reading materials, Dr. Shamsomoluk Mosaheb, became one of the first women senators to sit in Iran's parliamentary body.

**Developing Colleges & Universities.** To support the development of Iranian experts and leaders, NEF supported the growth of institutions of higher education. With NEF's support, in 1958 the Ahwaz Agricultural College evolved from a struggling three-year college into the country's first four-year university. NEF would supervise the Ahwaz College program until 1968. NEF would continue to send technical experts to support Ahwaz and other institutions until it left Iran in 1979. The institution is now Shahid Chamran University.

The Iranian Government asked NEF to advise on the creation of a four-year college, the Rezaiyeh Agricultural College, modeled after the land grant universities of the United States. NEF developed the curriculum and facilities and established an experimental farm nearby. The first land grant-college in Iran exists today as Urmia University.

Young women pose in the garden at the Galeh Nou School in Iran, 1960. Developed in response to a serious shortage of women teachers, the school provided teacher training to young women from Iranian villages. It was the first of its kind and it helped address a major barrier to rural girls' education in the country.

Iranians inspect an earthquake-affected area in northwestern Iran, 1962. The earthquake devastated the area and destroyed every school in the region. NEF responded by cooperating with villages rebuild primary schools for boys and girls.

**Sanitation & Disease Prevention.** NEF also worked to improve public health. It tested and implemented new methods of malaria control and produced a low-cost water treatment system to provide safe drinking water in rural schools. In 1952, it created and began to operate the Palasht Sanitation School. The school trained large numbers of sanitation aides in support of a nationwide public health program. It also operated a well-drilling program to produce water for drinking and irrigation.

With the introduction of widespread irrigation, which permitted the expan-





sion of agriculture in arid regions of the country, the parasitic disease Bilharzia became widespread in Iran. NEF worked to eradicate the disease by ridding waterways of the snail that hosts the parasite and improving sanitation systems to prevent reinfection of clean waters.

**Rebuilding in Earthquake-Affected Areas.** In 1962, a severe earthquake hit the populous agricultural area where NEF worked. Thousands of people were killed, tens of thousands were left homeless, and there was untold damage to infrastructure and agricultural assets. NEF sought to make a contribution outside the realm of traditional relief that would directly benefit a large number of rural people.

The earthquake had destroyed all fifty-four schools in the area. Even before the earthquake, only three of the fifty-four had provided schooling to girls. NEF staff in Tehran developed a plan of post-earthquake assistance focused on education. The Iranian government gave its approval, and NEF immediately began implementation. Under the plan, NEF developed a women's teacher-training school in Ghazvin and reconstructed elementary schools in the earthquake-affected area. It would help increase the number of women teachers in the area and counter the low attendance of girls in schools. NEF also worked with the Ministry of Education and the villagers to rebuild seven schools and teachers' residences in the Kolangin Valley.

NEF continued to build elementary schools in the ensuing decade. And when another major earthquake hit Iran in 1968, NEF drew upon its experiences in the Kolangin Valley to quickly mobilize and rebuild schools.



In 1955, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlevi bestowed the honor of the Order of Hodayoun on Cleveland E. Dodge, chairman of NEF's Board of Trustees, for "distinguished service to the cause of humanity," at a celebration of 25 years of NEF's technical assistance program.

By the late 1970s, the Iranian government had adopted responsibility for most of the NEF programs. As the economic conditions in the country improved and the government became more self-sufficient, NEF's portfolio in Iran had diminished correspondingly. Its work terminated completely with the Iranian Revolution in 1979.

## INFLUENCE ON DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTIONS

The practice NEF established of working in tandem with foreign governments and local organizations was nearly unprecedented at the time, but it has since provided a model for many of today's most well-known development organizations—including USAID and the Peace Corps.

### Point IV Program

A few years after NEF began its work in Iran, the U.S. government began to consider developing a technical assistance branch of its own. In his inaugural address in 1949, President Truman called for the development of a technical assistance program. A year later, he cited NEF's work in Iran as an example of what such a program could accomplish. When the government program, known as "Point IV," was established in October 1950, it became the U.S. platform for advancing the political, economic, and social conditions of people living in underdeveloped countries, distinct from national defense or post-war reconstruction efforts.<sup>30</sup>

The Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA), Point IV's administrative

body, looked to private agencies like NEF as a source of practiced techniques and proven approaches. TCA's early strategies shared many of NEF's guiding principles, including a "village-level, grass-roots approach."<sup>31</sup> NEF provided early guidance and cooperation, and Point IV made substantial financial contributions to NEF's work, permitting it to expand its programs in Greece, Lebanon, Syria, and Iran.<sup>32</sup>

Point IV was the precursor to the U.S. Agency for International Development

With funding from the U.S. Point IV program, and later USAID, NEF introduced improved agricultural practices in Iran. Here, a man prepares to use a mechanical seeder, 1964.



## The Point IV Program: President Truman Looks to NEF

Twenty years after NEF was created and four years after it began working in Iran, President Truman called for the development of the Point IV program. He cited to NEF's work in Iran as an example of what could be accomplished.<sup>33</sup>

Behind the shield of a strong defense we must continue to work to bring about better living conditions in free nations.

Particularly in the underdeveloped areas of the world we must work cooperatively with local governments which are seeking to improve the welfare of their people. We must help them to help themselves. We must aid them to make progress in agriculture, in industry, in health, and in the education of their children. Such progress will increase their strength and independence.

...

For these reasons, I recommended in my inaugural address the program that has become known as Point Four. The Congress authorized technical assistance to underprivileged areas under this program. This new law marked Congressional endorsement of a practical and sensible course of action that can have tremendous benefits for the future of the world.

...

"Let me give you another example of what Point Four can mean; this one in Iran. This story concerns not an international organization, but one of our American voluntary groups, the Near

East Foundation.

Four years ago, the Government of Iran asked the foundation to set up a demonstration project in a group of thirty-five villages not far from the capital, Tehran. The Foundation brought village leaders to a series of training courses. It won their confidence, and through these leaders it began to carry out agricultural and health improvements.

The Foundation met a water shortage by drilling deep wells. It overcame water-borne diseases with an inexpensive filter. It sprayed homes with DDT. It sprayed crops with insecticides. It helped to organize schools in each of the thirty-five villages.

Today, only four years later, the village people are at work in new carpentry shops, vegetable gardens, and orchards. And, most startling of all, the yield of grain in this area has tripled.

The effects of the Near East Foundation's work are spreading throughout Iran. This story will be matched many times over, under the Point Four program.

— *President Harry S. Truman at the Seventeenth Annual American Newspaper Guild Meeting in Washington D.C. (June 28, 1950).*

(USAID), the contemporary American government agency devoted to foreign development. Congress created USAID in 1961. NEF worked with USAID extensively through the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, and it continues a strong partnership with the agency today.

### **U.S. Peace Corps**

Pauline Birky-Kreutzer worked as a community development program officer with NEF in Iran from 1956-1958. She returned to the United States and in 1960 co-authored the Congressional feasibility study that led to the founding of the Peace Corps under President Kennedy. When Peace Corps began its programs in Iran in 1962, NEF directed the Peace Corps rural education project and Peace Corps appointed NEF's Educational Director, Dr. Abbas Ekkrami, as the Peace Corps-Iran national supervisor. In the first year, NEF worked with 43 Peace Corps volunteers.

Pauline Birky-Kreutzer and her husband, Carl Birky, first went to Iran in 1956. Carl had taken a two-year position with NEF in Iran through the State Department. Pauline was soon hired as an associate advisor for NEF's women's programs, promoting community development and training Iranian women to work in the fields of nutrition and literacy.

When the Birkys returned to Fort Collins in 1958, Birky-Kreutzer joined the Colorado State University Research Foundation (CSURF). It was there, working with engineering professor Maurice Albertson, that she co-authored the feasibility study for a new youth training program. A version was later published as a book entitled *New Frontiers for American Youth: Perspective on the Peace Corps*.

Pauline Birky-Kreutzer directed the Peace Corps training program for Pakistan. She trained volunteers in Colorado and worked for nearly two years in-country as the local coordinator. Birky-Kreutzer continued her work as a Peace Corps trainer when she returned to Colorado in 1964. She published her memoirs, *Peace Corps Pioneer, or the Perils of Pauline*, in 2003. Pauline Birky-Kreutzer died in 2008 at the age of 92. According to her obituary, her experience working in Iran in the 1950s gave birth to her "lifelong interest in promoting peace and understanding between the peoples of the world."<sup>34</sup>



Pauline Birky (at left), who worked with NEF in Iran, co-authored the Congressional feasibility study for the U.S. Peace Corps and lead Peace Corps training programs for Pakistan. Here, she is with the wife of the Indian Ambassador to Iran, Begum Feroz Khan Noon (Chairman of the West Pakistan Red Cross and wife of the Pakistan Foreign Minister), and Mrs. Ziai (NEF Director of Women's Activities) visiting NEF programs in Bongah, Iran, 1957.

LEBANON & SYRIA



**Above: Farmers from Chtaura and Bar Elias gather for a training. Bekaa Valley, Lebanon, c. 1945.**

**Opposite: Afghan farmers use a seed cleaner made in Afghanistan and fashioned after a U.S. model, c. 1957. With Point IV funding, NEF briefly piloted a community developed program in Afghanistan's Logar Valley in the mid-1950s.**

NEF continued its work in the Middle East, including in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria. In Lebanon these efforts included public health programs and malaria control in Anjar and agricultural education and extension, rural improvement, and community development demonstrations in Chtaura. The Anjar program also introduced local industries and agricultural improvement and established a nursery that produced seedlings that could be sold to support community improvements. In Chtaura, NEF worked in eight villages in the Bekaa Valley and operated a two-acre experimental station designed to identify crop pests and diseases and to test controls.

In 1946, the newly independent Syria was looking to the west for development assistance. The Syrian government requested NEF's help, and NEF made arrangements to begin a program in rural development in the Ghouta District.





**Above: Young girls and their teacher in Bar Elias, Lebanon, 1947. Opposite: A Palestinian refugee Camp in Jordan, c. 1950.**

Clarence Eyer, an agriculturist from Indiana, would direct the agricultural components, and Josephine Vogt, of Wisconsin, the home welfare programs. In addition to extension work, NEF utilized a plot of land outside of Damascus as an agricultural research station and demonstration. Eyer used the plot to test different plant varieties and agricultural techniques. By its third year, there were nearly 150 visitors to the station each month, including members of government, large landowners, and smallholder farmers. NEF expanded the program to include Palestinian refugees after the Arab-Israeli conflict and partition in 1948.

NEF began the year 1952 with a home-making center in Nashabeyeh and an agricultural center in Kaber Essit. By the end of the year, it was operating four home welfare units and four agricultural centers, serving a 65-village area. Hanna Khouri, a Jordanian who had worked with NEF in Lebanon, became the director of the agricultural program in 1951. Clarence Eyer remained in place as the overall program director. Khouri, an ethnic Bedouin, served as a “sociological trouble shooter” for the expanding program and greatly improved its ability to reach local communities. At Nashabeyeh, the program expanded to become a training



## 1948: Palestinian Refugee Crisis

In 1948, the Arab-Israeli war and the partition of Palestine rocked the Middle East. The home of NEF's agricultural director in Syria, Clarence Eyer, was destroyed in an early morning Israeli bombing of Damascus. (Eyer and his family fortunately were away).

Several hundred thousand refugees were displaced by the violence and partition of Palestine. They came to Syria, Lebanon, and what was then Transjordan. There was insufficient food or shelter for the refugees. As they crowded into makeshift camps, dismal sanitation and health conditions followed. Count Folke Bernadotte, the UN mediator for Palestine, reported desperate conditions and appealed to U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall for assistance from the United States.<sup>36</sup> Secretary Marshall responded, noting that NEF would manage \$200,000 donated by oil interests for refugee relief.<sup>37</sup> And, where NEF was already working in through its extension program, it immediately began efforts to improve hygiene and sanitation in the refugee camps. When a cholera

epidemic broke out, NEF mobilized its resources and the local community to give vaccinations in a round-the-clock program.

NEF's refugee work was directed by Souad Ajlani, and her leadership was essential to NEF's work with the refugees. In 1950, NEF helped to establish a school for refugee children in a mosque in Damascus. One hundred, fifty-seven boys and girls graduated, and an additional 240 children were registered for the following year. In 1951, NEF helped 40 families to leave the refugee camps and settle on land donated by a large landholder. The families were given seed and tools so they could farm the land and regain some of their self-sufficiency.

NEF expanded its rural welfare program, which offered agricultural extension, education, and sanitation training, to include 35,000 Palestinian refugees. NEF's work became a center for training leaders for refugee activities. The League of Red Cross Societies awarded NEF the Folke Bernadotte Medal for its work with refugees in the wake of the 1948 war.





## Hanna Khouri

**A native of Kerak,** Transjordan (now Al Karak, Jordan), Hanna Khouri spent the first twelve years of his career as a high school teacher. He graduated from the American University of Beirut (AUB) in 1945 with a degree in Sociology and Education. After working for AUB for a year, Khouri attended Cornell University on a NEF scholarship. He completed graduate work in Sociology while also working with the University's rural extension programs.

In 1948 Khouri joined NEF in Chtaura, Lebanon as the supervisor of social and cultural activities. A year later he was named acting supervisor for NEF's Lebanon program. Khouri managed to maintain NEF's programs in agriculture, sanitation, home welfare, and recreation despite a



budget crisis. When NEF was forced to suspend work in Lebanon in 1950, Khouri became an assistant professor of Rural Sociology at AUB. In 1951 Khouri agreed to take charge of NEF's agricultural extension program in Syria. After five years in Syria, he moved to Jordan to work on the Community Development and Rural Resources Development Programs.

Khouri introduced new resources, ranging from health clinics to telephones, in four Jordanian villages through the JASH program. As a result of his work, the villages became nearly self-sufficient for the first time. Khouri enjoyed a long and productive relationship with the Jordanian government and was recognized as an expert in his field. He continued to lead NEF's Jordan program until his retirement in 1981.

center for village workers and for village women who served as midwives.

In the midst of this expansion, the U.S. Congress amended the Mutual Security Act to require any government receiving economic or military aid to sign an agreement with the United States. The Syrian government refused to sign such an agreement, and NEF's expanding program—funded by Point IV—risked termination. The Syrian government reacted by passing a decree that would eliminate all foreign cultural and educational activities in the country. It appeared the NEF program would face an untimely death. The Ford Foundation indicated its willingness to support NEF's work to prevent it from being halted altogether. Clarence Eyer was able to obtain a letter from the Syrian Prime Minister authorizing NEF's continued work in Syria, notwithstanding the earlier decree. NEF was able

to maintain its programs.

In 1956, political instability and international politics were causing conditions in Syria to deteriorate. Home welfare worker Souad Ajlani rose to a leadership position in the midst of this complexity. Ajlani traveled to the U.S. in 1955 to obtain a bachelor's degree in Tennessee—a feat she accomplished in 18 months with no prior college training—and then returned to Syria. Around the same time, NEF's American staff were finishing their contracts, leaving the then-director, B.W. Brink, as the only remaining American in Syria. When Americans were ordered to leave the country, Brink and his family moved to Beirut. Before leaving, he appointed Ajlani as the administrative head of NEF programs, responsible to the Ministry of Social Affairs. Ajlani capably led the NEF programs, fulfilling the goal of fostering local leadership, and the Ministry itself became more invested in the programs it oversaw. Writing of Ajlani and her recruitment by Josephine Vogt, NEF Director of Education Harold Allen remarked: “[Josephine Vogt] bequeathed to the country a leader of great capacity. This one contribution is sufficient to justify the existence of Near East Foundation in that area since 1946.”<sup>35</sup>



A map showing NEF's activities in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon, c. 1952.



## JORDAN

Above: Residents at one of Jordan's Boys' Clubs learn carpentry skills, c. 1959.

Opposite: Amman, Jordan, 1981. In Jordan's cities, NEF Boys' Clubs gave homeless boys shelter and a safe place to socialize and learn new skills.

NEF expanded its programs in Jordan in the late 1950s. Delmar Dooley, who had worked as an Area Director in Iran, directed the program. Apostolos Koskinides and Hanna Khouri served as trainers.

**Community Development Pilot Demonstration.** From 1956-60, NEF operated the Community Development Pilot Demonstration (CDPD) as a contractor to the Development Board of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the United States Operations Mission to Jordan. The program focused on economic development through agricultural improvements. In partnership with the Jordanian government, NEF created a coordinated program in agriculture, education, public health, credit, cooperatives, small scale industry, public works, and village or-





**A boy with a Shami goat, Jordan, 1964. NEF's goat improvement program crossed local breeds goats with a breed that supplies more milk, meat, and hair per animal – allowing farmers to maintain the supply of these commodities while reducing the number of goats—animals that are notoriously destructive.**

ganization. It conducted literacy classes, built playgrounds and enlarged schools, established clinics and child care centers, and developed water infrastructure. NEF operated demonstration programs in Amman and Ramallah; in 1958 a third center was opened in Beitt Hanina.

In addition to the CDPD, which was a Point IV project, NEF operated two of its own initiatives in Jordan—Boys' Clubs and the Rural Resources Development Program.



**Boys' Clubs.** NEF's programs in Jordan included the Amman Boys' Club that provided vocational training, literacy classes, employee placement, and social programs for youth, many of whom were street children. The Club was created in 1958 and operated with Ministry of Social Welfare. By 1961, there were 75 boys who regularly participated in Club programs—most between the ages of 10 and 15. The success led to the formation of other Boys' Clubs in Nablus, Aqaba, Irbid, and Zarqa.

Each Club provided shelter for homeless boys. The boys were responsible for taking care of the club, managing its activities, and participating in training programs and recreational facilities. Staff taught the boys trade skills, such as wood-working, metal-working, and tailoring and helped place the boys in apprenticeships. Employees of the Club followed up to ensure the boys were being treated

The NEF Rural Resources Development Program sold improved hives at cost to cooperating farmers. Jordan, c. 1975.



Men inspect a newly planted olive tree in Jordan, c. 1972. The NEF Rural Resources Development Program distributed over 150,000 olive tree seedlings to farmers in south Jordan in 1972.

properly by employers and that they were doing a satisfactory job.

**Rural Resources Development Program (RRDP).** In 1960, NEF developed a Rural Resources Development Center to disseminate improved agricultural practices to village farmers, including artificial insemination, poultry and goat breeding, and orchard and vineyard cultivation. NEF operated the

RRDP in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Jordan Development Board. The RRDP aimed to improve village life by working with average farm families to increase agricultural production for home consumption and sale and to reduce the amount of agricultural products imported into Jordan.

After the Six-Day War in June 1967, another wave of refugees came to the region. NEF expanded its projects, with a focus on increasing food production to meet increased demand. The program was further extended in 1974 to the Wadi Seer areas through the Balka-Wadi Seer Extension Development Project, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture.

**JASH Self-Help Program.** In 1962, NEF began rural development activities in the villages of Judaiyida, Adir, Simakiya, and Humud (JASH), made possible by the financial contribution of the Pontifical Mission for Palestine and the German Catholic Bishop's Fund, known as MISEREOR. The JASH area is located on the edge of the desert in southern Jordan, northeast of the district center of Karak. The villages of this area are the last line facing the desert.

The JASH villages lacked public services such as roads, water, postal, and other communication facilities. They experienced unreliable crop production. The JASH rural development program was undertaken as a pilot to test whether livelihoods could be sufficiently broadened and stabilized to assure the villages of



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## John S. Badeau

**Dr. John Badeau** spent his entire career in the Near East. An ordained minister with a degree in civil engineering, Badeau had spent seven years as a missionary teacher in Iraq. He joined the faculty of the American University in Cairo in 1936 as a professor of religion and philosophy. Badeau became the University president in 1945, a position he held for eight years.

Badeau's experience in education and international development made him an ideal candidate to lead NEF. He was named president of the organization in 1953. Under Badeau's leadership, NEF explored new institutional relationships in different countries while continuing its landmark work in Greece, Syria, and Iran. NEF marked the beginning of its work in Africa, which continues today, and con-

ducted a program in Korea.

In 1961, President Kennedy selected Dr. Badeau as the U.S. Ambassador to the United Arab Republic, a short-lived political union between Egypt and Syria. Badeau was widely praised for his ability to facilitate communication between President Kennedy and President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Badeau returned to the U.S. in 1964 and served as the Director of the Middle and Near East Institute at Columbia University until his retirement in 1971. He also served on the NEF Board of Directors. Badeau wrote and edited numerous books on the Middle East, including *Bread from Stones: Fifty Years of Technical Assistance* (1966), which celebrated NEF's 50-year anniversary. Dr. John S. Badeau died in 1995 at the age of 92.

self-sufficiency, even during periods of little rain.

NEF introduced livestock, fruit trees, grape vines, and vegetables that had not been produced in the area. It also provided training on improved farm and home-making practices and village industries. NEF employed a village-level worker to assist villagers in all types of development and educational work.

Through the JASH project, NEF worked with the villages to improve poultry, goat, and sheep production, tree and vine planting and management, wheat seed cleaning and treatment, wool and rug weaving demonstrations, home welfare, road improvements, development of village organizations, and in water development, health, and sanitation programs. NEF supported village leaders to develop organizations capable of assuming responsibility for rural development programs.

The Government of Jordan awarded the NEF Board of Directors the Independence Medal (Second Class) in recognition of NEFs service to the Jordanian people in 1968-69.





## **Expansion Beyond the Near East (1956-1980)**

NEF grew beyond the Middle East in 1956, with its expansion into Ghana. In 1958, it began work in Korea.

The programs were successful and, perhaps more importantly, demonstrated the applicability of NEF's program approach in cultural and political contexts that were very different from the Near East.

Previous pages: Agricultural information worker Vicks Molefe tests extension materials with a Mkgalagadi farmer, Botswana 1978. NEF worked with the Ministry of Agriculture on improving seed stock, land reclamation, irrigation, and livestock along with extension programs.

## GHANA

NEF was asked by Point IV's International Cooperation Administration (ICA) to consider working in the Gold Coast, shortly before the country became the independent nation of Ghana. The British colonial government's Department of Social Welfare and Community Development worked with rural communities through community development programs. These programs were informed in part by NEF's Macedonia Project and several features of the Macedonia program were incorporated into the national services emerging in the Gold Coast.<sup>40</sup>

NEF sent Dr. Harold Allen, Director of Programs, on an exploratory trip in 1956. Dr. Allen reported favorably on the potential work, and the NEF Board unanimously gave its approval. NEF would begin work in 1957. The new government of Ghana continued and expanded the community development programs and invited NEF's technical assistance.



NEF's role was to help promote the use of large mechanical tools on a co-operative basis to accelerate community development work—for example using heavy machinery and tools to build clinics, classrooms, community centers, or new roads. NEF recruited American engineers to provide training and technical support at “Technical Field Units.” These sites provided equipment, offered engineering and construction expertise, and coordinated assistance on community development activities. NEF continued to work in Ghana until 1961. In its final project year, NEF helped to complete more than 450 separate projects.



NEF's entry to Ghana, coupled with the evolution of Point IV into the USAID, opened the door to NEF to work extensively in Africa. Generally, NEF did not establish new programs through this work, but rather helped to fill a gap in technical expertise to promote development within the host country's own institutions.

## KOREA

In 1958, NEF was invited to work in Korea for the U.S. Mission under Point IV. It was tasked with helping the Korean government launch a national rural community development program. NEF providing in-service training to village-level community development workers, advised on field work, and developed training materials and manuals. The program was directed by Delmar Dooley and William Fuller, who both had worked with NEF in Iran. It was highly successful, and helped demonstrate that NEF's basic approach and model of operation worked in a cultural and organizational context that was very different from the Near

**Opposite: A Technical Field Unit survey team on the road to northern Ghana, 1961. From 1956-61, NEF technical experts supported mechanical and technical field units on community infrastructure and development projects such as building market roads and buildings. Above: Two men of the Ghana Technical Field Unit practice surveying the landscape, Ghana, c. 1958.**



Rice farmers in Korea, 1962. NEF worked with the Korean government on community development programs from 1958-1963.

Eastern countries where NEF had previously worked. The program concluded in 1963, and NEF did not seek to expand its work in the country. In part, this decision reflected the significant presence of other development organizations and the sense among NEF's leadership that other areas with more pressing needs could be better served by the organization.

## GROWING WORK IN AFRICA

**Work with the U.S. Agency for International Development.** Soon after USAID was created in 1961, NEF began to work with the agency. NEF signed its first contract with USAID in 1964. It operated under a broad technical assistance contract. Over the next fifteen years, NEF recruited and assigned more than one hundred technicians to twenty African countries.

Unsurprisingly, NEF's technical assistance work in Africa focused on agriculture. By this time, NEF had helped develop agricultural schools across the Middle East and Iran. Through its USAID-funded work, NEF brought this experience to Africa. NEF technical experts supported the development of farm schools and agricultural colleges across the continent. They helped build the administrative capacity of the institutions and conducted educational activities on topics such

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## Delmer Dooley

**Delmer Dooley** grew up on a farm in rural South Dakota. At the age of 20, he enlisted in the Air Force and served from 1942 to 1945. After earning a degree in agricultural engineering from South Dakota University, Dooley began a career as a high school agriculture teacher in Platte, South Dakota.

In 1955, Dooley joined NEF as a Rural Development Specialist in Iran. Four years later, he was appointed Area Director of Jordan. Dooley oversaw a series of ambitious agricultural projects in Jordan, including the introduction of animal husbandry programs that enabled Jordanian farmers to increase milk production with fewer animals. He also supervised the creation of youth centers in the capital city of Amman.

From Jordan, Dooley traveled to Korea to serve as the Area Director. He supervised a team of seven agricultural technicians who trained ap-



proximately 500 people per year in rural self-help techniques and youth agricultural education. More than 7,500 young people took classes in poultry and rabbit breeding, beekeeping, and silkworm cultivation in 1962.

Dooley was named Executive Director of NEF in 1964. In this role, he oversaw the beginning of NEF's long relationship with USAID while maintaining

NEF's programs in the Middle East. He also served as the chairman of the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service.

Dooley retired in 1982, although he continued to serve on NEF's International Council for many years. Dooley and his wife Talia returned to the family farm near Ramona, South Dakota in 1983. In September 2015, the South Dakota Department of Agriculture presented the Dooleys with a Centennial Farm Award for operating one of the oldest family-run farms in the state.

as forestry and soil conservation, groundwater and village water supply system development, government administration and organizational planning, and recruitment and training of personnel.

In addition to their work at agricultural schools and colleges, NEF technicians worked with government ministries, water and forest service departments, and agricultural departments. Its work included extensionist training, demonstration programs, and development of new crops, nursery activities, and cattle improvement programs.





Sudanese beekeepers display honey in frames at the Shambat Apiary, c. 1985. NEF worked with Sudanese agricultural scientists to increase honey production for household use and as an income-generating activity.

**The NEF Africa Fund.** By 1973, the African institutions that NEF and its technicians had supported with USAID funding were becoming increasingly self-sufficient, and the need for expatriate support for those programs diminished. Nevertheless, NEF recognized the overwhelming need of rural people in Africa and determined it would continue to conduct smaller projects in select countries. NEF launched a new initiative to support this kind of work — the NEF Africa Fund. NEF hoped to raise between 2.5 and 3 million dollars. Though the campaign did not reach its ultimate funding goal, it was sufficiently successful to permit NEF to launch its own development initiatives in Africa.

During the Africa Fund's first year, NEF began work in Lesotho, Botswana,

Malawi, and Tanzania. It soon added the Gambia, Swaziland, and Togo. NEF's Africa Fund work centered on livestock and range management, development of cooperatives, reforestation, soil conservation, improving seed, and building the technical expertise of local workers through mentoring and training. These activities were coordinated with each country's long-term development plan and emphasized the development of local leaders.

A worker repairs the continuous track from a piece of heavy machinery. Ghana, c. 1960. NEF experts provided training in machinery operation and maintenance. Equipment that could not be maintained locally would soon fall into disuse.



A student leads exercises at  
an agricultural college, 1971.  
NEF's rural development  
program in Togo included  
work with the Tove Agricul-  
tural school, the major train-  
ing ground for agricultural  
technicians in the country,  
and a rural development  
center at Tchitchao.





Above: Angora goats in Swaziland, 1980. NEF worked with the government and farmers to establish a domestic herd of Angora breeding stock and encourage mohair production. Below: Graduates of a course at the Cameroonian Department of Agriculture's Muyuka Poultry Center, a joint government-NEF-USAID project. Cameroon, 1966. To increase income and access to food, the program introduced improved breeds, constructed poultry-raising facilities, established vaccination programs, and developed extension activities to train local farmers in improved practices.





Above: At Colby College in Malawi, NEF trained instructors and staff in agricultural topics and teaching strategies. At the end of the 6-year project, the Malawi faculty and staff adopted responsibility for operating the college. In this photo, young men weigh seeds as part of their coursework, 1969. Below: Women listen as an extension agent discusses Sorghum, Botswana c. 1975.





A women's literacy  
class. Togo, 1966.

In Swaziland, NEF specialists worked with the Ministry of Agriculture on a Saddle Horse Breeding Project. In this mountainous country, horses were essential to forestry, range, sheep, and cattle ranch work. Photo c. 1977.







## **Refocusing On Community Development (1980-2010)**

Beginning in the 1980s, NEF began to refocus on its own initiatives and programs, led by established overseas offices. These initiatives centered on agricultural improvements tailored to local conditions and on strengthening local institutions. The NEF leadership viewed this shift as a return to the organization's roots.

## REFOCUSING ON CORE PRINCIPALS

NEF's leadership observed that the organization's substantial work as contract-based technical advisors had resulted in a movement from the original commitment to building and scaling up its own models for holistic, community-based development. By developing NEF-sponsored programs in agriculture, local governance, and community building, the organization realigned its work with its original purposes and methods for identifying and addressing local priorities and needs.

**A blacksmith in El Obeid, Sudan, forges a new NEF-designed tool for harvesting gum arabic sustainably, 2011. NEF has worked in Sudan continuously since 1982.**

Reflecting on this deliberate rebalancing of its work, NEF President Richard C. Robarts described a three-pronged approach to programming between 1982 and 1987: 1) technical assistance assignments, in which a qualified specialist was seconded to a locally-managed project or institution, 2) grants to agricultural research centers, including the American University of Beirut and International

Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), and 3) rural and community-level projects developed and managed by NEF specialists in cooperation with local organizations.<sup>41</sup>

NEF's leaders recognized the organization's comparative advantage to be its role as an operating agency: providing professional and financial resources to projects designed by and implemented by NEF with local partners, until until they could be devolved to national management. Increasingly, NEF used this model and worked in cooperation with other donor agencies to implement projects ranging from beekeeping in Sudan and Swaziland to community development projects in Egypt and Jordan.

In his 1996 report to the Board, Robarts reflected on NEF's structure. Contrary to many development organizations of the time, rather than operating in a "vertical" fashion with authority running from the New York headquarters office to the field, NEF worked in a "horizontal style" where the New





## Chuck Roberts

**Richard “Chuck” Roberts** worked for NEF for 20 productive years. Born in Maine, Roberts graduated from Bowdoin College in 1955. He joined the Ford Foundation in 1963 and spent nearly two decades living and working in Lebanon and Egypt.

In 1982, NEF selected Roberts as its new Executive Director. Roberts steered NEF as the organization rededicated itself to implementing its own programs and establishing permanent overseas programs. In 1988, Roberts transitioned to the role of NEF President. By the end of the decade, NEF’s annual budget had grown to \$7 million.

In the 1990s, Roberts presided over NEF’s groundbreaking work in Africa. Operating under the long-held precept that good health is a prerequisite for community well-being, NEF’s new projects included important public health initiatives. In 1991, NEF began an agricultural program in Lesotho. However, it soon became apparent



that the small country had an even greater need: managing the impacts of the HIV/AIDS crisis. NEF gave local communities the tools to host educational programs and launch media campaigns on risk reduction. NEF also began a community foster program for children orphaned by the AIDS epidemic. At the same time, NEF, worked to improve repro-

ductive health for thousands of women in Egypt, Morocco, and Sudan. By 2002, NEF was assisting 20,000 internally displaced persons at a reproductive health clinic in Khartoum, Sudan.

In his 20 years of leadership, Roberts was known for his ability to recognize and respond to issues quickly and creatively. He was an important mentor to a new generation of leadership in the countries where NEF works, including local country directors. After retiring in 2003, Roberts remained active on the Board until 2010. He remains on the Honorary Board today.

York headquarters acted as a support center.<sup>42</sup> Field staff have broad responsibility for project development and implementation, while financial accountability and good reporting to New York is required. NEF continues to operate under this framework today.

In addition to this decentralization, during the 1980s and 1990s NEF’s overseas programs were characterized by diversification of project activities. Broad themes of empowerment and institution building permeated NEF’s work in different locales, but the form of specific projects responds to local needs. Long-term

A Berber woman with an improved dairy goat in Morocco's High Atlas Mountains, c. 1990. Opposite: Iminoulaoun village in Morocco's High Atlas Mountains, where NEF works with PTAs to increase girls' enrollment, c. 2000.

commitments were based on flexibility and receptiveness to changing needs and opportunities. Diversification sometimes posed challenges in communicating a complicated and nuanced mission statement to attract funding. But ultimately, the lack of a single agency-wide priority was testimony to NEF's greatest attributes as a development organization: local understanding and responsiveness.

Following these principles, by the end of the 1990s and into the 2000s, NEF programs assumed many forms, including domestic energy in Morocco, primary education in the West Bank and rural Morocco, healthcare in Sudan and Egypt, microcredit in Jordan, Lebanon, and Mali, agriculture and natural resources management in Mali and Morocco, small business development in Jordan and Egypt, urban renewal in some of the poorest sections of Cairo, and local governance in almost every country where NEF worked.

#### EVOLUTION OF A MODERN NEF PROGRAM: DIVERSIFICATION, RESPONSIVENESS & FLEXIBILITY

The principles of decentralization, responsiveness, and flexibility are clearly illustrated in the evolution of NEF's program in Morocco. The program began with rural development in the High Atlas Mountains and expanded over the years to include rural primary education, local governance, and urban youth development.

NEF began its programs in Morocco in 1987, led initially by Allison Geist, who had been a Peace Corps volunteer in the southern region of Ouarzazate. For the first five years, projects focused on improving the lives of women and children through improved dairy goat production and agricultural extension. This program, conducted with the Moroccan Ministry of Agriculture and the Regional Development Authority in Ouarzazate, responded to immediate needs for improved nutrition and income diversification for women in the High Atlas Mountains.







**A potter in southern Morocco displays the fuel-efficient cookstoves he learned to make at NEF's Appropriate Technology Training Center, 1996.**

Over the next ten years, NEF continued to work primarily in the Ouarzazate Region, but its work broadened programmatically. The experience of the dairy goat project showed that rural Moroccans—especially women—faced myriad development challenges associated with health, income, and education. In 1993, NEF established the Appropriate Technology Training Center. The Center was the inspiration of the NEF Morocco Country Director, Charles Benjamin, a former Peace Corps volunteer and Fulbright scholar who joined NEF in 1993 and now serves as NEF President. Through the Center, NEF engaged in participatory technology development to address basic needs. And, it used appropriate technology as a catalyst for community organizing. NEF technicians developed fuel-efficient cook stoves, water pumps, sustainable agriculture techniques, bee-keeping, and small animal husbandry.

An NEF survey found that the average woman in the early 1990s spent 1,000 hours per year collecting firewood—leaving little time to improve her life or the

status of her household. NEF technicians worked directly with village women and local potters to develop efficient cookstoves that reduced fuel needs by half. They then trained local potters to produce and sell the stoves and introduced them into the local marketplace.

Technology was only part of the answer, but its development could be used as a platform for organizing communities, and particularly women, to control their own development. NEF's work soon evolved to address local language literacy, and, through this, primary education. In the early 2000s, community leaders in villages where NEF worked indicated that education was their top priority. But there were many barriers to enrollment, particularly for girls. Many parents were themselves illiterate and had never attended school, yet under the public education system parents were responsible for managing the schools and supervising teachers. Few had ever set foot in the schools that had been built for their villages. But they understood the value of education to their children's future.

Under the direction of NEF Morocco Program Director Abdelkhalk Aandam, NEF worked with rural primary schools and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) that had been created by the state, but that were poorly understood within the community, to strengthen community support for schools and to improve enrollment and retention. This helped bridge the gap, so that PTAs could grow into the responsibility of managing village schools. Girls' enrollment grew from an average of 10 percent to 98 percent over a period of three years—enrollment levels that have been sustained.

Soon, NEF expanded beyond the High Atlas Mountains and across southern and central Morocco. Working closely with the Ministry of Education, NEF utilized its model for strengthening PTA engagement to improve rural education. It



Schoolchildren in Morocco's High Atlas Mountains, c. 2005.



**NEF staff members conduct a census in the peri-urban shantytown of Nouacer in Casablanca, c. 2006.**

touched the lives of 16,000 students in 114 schools—half of them girls—between 2005 and 2010. The regional academies for southern and central Morocco adopted NEF’s approach. NEF continues to work to replicate and expand the PTA model based on community demand and works on social accountability more broadly, using rural education as a platform to organize communities.

In 2005 NEF was asked to join RTI International to expand to the peri-urban slums of Casablanca and Mohammedia. Initially, this work concerned easing the resettlement of residents forced to relocate out of shantytowns. Over three years, NEF organized youth groups that could effectively find economic opportunities and represent youth interests. NEF helped the members to formalize their groups as youth councils that are recognized by the local governments.

To address sky-high unemployment in these impoverished peri-urban slums, NEF continues its focus on the participation of youth in civil society and creation of economic opportunities. Today, NEF works with the youth councils in several major municipalities to promote youth entrepreneurship through business incubators, startup grants, microcredit, and business coaching.

Parallel to this work, NEF’s rural development program evolved to help communities organize to improve water management and irrigation. From 2010 to 2013, NEF helped 2,500 farmer families in 22 communities in Morocco’s Oriental





Region increase their income from olives, dates, and vegetable production by using agricultural water more efficiently and productively. Farmers reported an increase in agricultural income of up to 24 percent and decreased water consumption of up to 60 percent.

**NEF's work on with new citrus varieties at Egypt's Desert Development Center gave rise to a billion-dollar industry, Egypt, c. 1990s.**

## INNOVATIONS & INSTITUTIONS

NEF's renewal of its community-based work coincided with a flourishing of civil society beginning in the 1990s, as national governments gradually—though cautiously—became open to non-governmental groups. As a result, many newly formed local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, and village development associations were established to address grassroots social and economic development needs.

From the start, NEF has been committed to programs developed in partner-



Youth learn techniques for renovating deteriorating housing in Cairo's ancient Al-Darb Al-Ahmar neighborhood, c. 2002. Opposite: NEF introduced fish farming practices to Jordan beginning in the 1980s. The industry provided a source of economic opportunity and met growing local demand for fish, c. 1988.

ship with and adopted by local communities. Initially, that largely meant government partners. With the emergence of civil society, NEF became equally committed to partnerships with civil organizations as a vehicle for local integration and long-term sustainability. In many NEF programs, strengthening these nascent groups has become a central aim.

NEF's work with these organizations yielded a number of important institutions and innovations.

**Egypt: Desert Development Center.** From 1980 through the early 1990s, NEF worked with the American University in Cairo (AUC) to establish the Desert Development Center (DDC) in South Tahrir in the Nile Delta. NEF provided technical assistance through citrus expert Mr. Joep Carlier and funding for research and extension to improve citrus production. The DDC bred a variety of orange adapted to the arid climate. The particular combination of rootstock and fruit became the foundation of Egypt's largest export sector, valued at \$1 billion dollars annually.<sup>43</sup>





Staff of NEF's Center for Development Services use participatory techniques to involve residents in planning improvements for Cairo's Tablita Market, c. 1990s.

**Jordan: Fish Farming.** In 1985, NEF worked with aquaculture specialists from Auburn University and the Tennessee Valley Authority to develop a model freshwater fish farm in Jordan's Azraq Oasis. The model would help meet growing local demand for fish in water scarce areas. Over the following two decades, NEF adapted this model for a broader range of local conditions, including in Lebanon and Egypt, and lead the expansion of commercial fish farming into the Jordan Valley and Gaza.

**Egypt: Center for Development Services.** NEF played a key role in introducing participatory development methods to the Middle East with support from its Center for Development Services (CDS) in Cairo.

Under the leadership of NEF Regional Director Roger Hardister, NEF established CDS in 1990 after several years of targeted training for new development professionals. CDS worked to build the capacity of the civil society sector so that local people and organizations could foster self-determined, self-sustaining change. CDS was managed independently from the NEF Egypt country office and played a regional technical support role for NEF programs.

CDS quickly established itself as the leading provider of Arabic-language training and technical assistance in the Middle East. With CDS, NEF introduced new development concepts and mentored local talent. A generation of Egyptian and Jordanian development and NGO leaders can trace their start to this period.

In addition to providing technical leadership for NEF in Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East, CDS technicians led training and assessments in partnership with other organizations, branching out to Yemen, Oman, Morocco, Afghanistan, and Iran. In 2006, CDS became an independent, employee-owned consulting firm.



In Jordan, NEF used participatory development techniques to help Ajloun carpenters establish this cooperative workshop, c. 2005.

**Jordan: Participatory Rapid Appraisal.** In the early 1990s, NEF introduced Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) as a new tool for assessing community needs and challenges and for designing programs to address community needs in a participatory manner. Building on methods developed in India, NEF adapted PRA for use in the Middle East, built a library of translated and original documents and training materials, and introduced PRA methods to development programs in Jordan and Egypt. NEF also offered training workshops in PRA for participants from Iran, Syria, Sudan, Egypt, and Lebanon.

NEF operated a significant training and networking program to train local and international NGOs and government departments on PRA in Jordan. The Jordanian Ministry of Social Development subsequently applied PRA as a planning tool for all of its offices, and it remains widely used by Ministry staff. The Jordanian Ministry of Agriculture and the General Union of Voluntary Societies also have applied the PRA methodology within their programs. International and national non-governmental development organizations have similarly adopted the PRA methodology.



NEF helped communities in Mali's Mopti region build simple stone dams to slow rainwater runoff and improve groundwater recharge, 1988.

**Mali: Local Conventions for Natural Resources Governance.** From its headquarters in Douentza, under the leadership of country directors Mike Winter and, later, Yacouba Dème, NEF in Mali established itself as a center for innovation for development in the Sahel. Its programs combined grassroots action, thoughtful research and model building, and advocacy with the NGO community and government.

This approach is clearly illustrated in NEF's pioneering use of local natural resource management conventions, an effort that began in 1992. At the time, Mali was emerging from a highly centralized, authoritarian forest policy that considered most local forest uses to be illegal. Communities nevertheless had a rich tradition of local self-governance. NEF helped encourage community-based forest governance that combined forest conservation with commercial harvesting of wood for fuel and construction.

Local conventions—negotiated multi-stakeholder natural resource management agreements—helped to ensure that local perspectives

were given voice in official forest governance systems. The first use of local conventions was in the 107,000-hectare Kelka Forest, in the Mopti Region. Local communities, national line ministries, and other stakeholders negotiate rules that become embodied in local conventions that are recognized by the central government. Since then, NEF helped negotiate and implement dozens of major, multi-village, multi-ethnic conventions covering shared forests, waterways, flood pastures, and fisheries.

The Kelka experience and subsequent NEF initiatives were visited frequently by Malian authorities and other organizations. They inspired government-sponsored programs in participatory forest management and NGO community-forestry initiatives. NEF also shared the experience and subsequent action-research findings at

national-level policy workshops. In 2007, the Malian government drafted a policy paper and methodological guide that would use local conventions as the basis for national legislation to enable the formal transfer of natural resources governance to local communities. In the following years, local conventions spread throughout francophone West Africa, to Senegal, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger.

In the wake of Mali's 1991 coup d'état, NEF assumed a leadership role in strengthening nascent decentralized local governments, training thousands of local government officials in democratic principles, participatory planning, and regulatory procedures. In 1994, NEF was a founding member of the Decentralized Natural Resource Management Network in Mopti (GDRN5), which brings together more than 40 international and local organizations for training and policy advocacy. Under NEF leadership, GDRN5 research and advocacy played a major role in shaping the Forest Code, the Pastoral Charter, the Agricultural Framework Law, and related implementation legislation.

**Woodcutters from Mali's Kelka Forest sell sustainably harvested wood at a roadside market, 2007.**





**Jordan: Community-Based Credit.** In the early 1990s, NEF in Jordan introduced a model of community-based credit to increase economic opportunities for vulnerable groups—mainly women and youth—by helping them to start small businesses. The program aimed to give these entrepreneurs access to credit through a mechanism that could be managed and sustained at the community level. The system was based upon both traditional banking and Islamic lending. Recipients of funds also would participate in business skill building exercises.

In partnership with community-based organizations, NEF introduced a community-based credit program in more than 60 disadvantaged areas in each of the 12 governorates in Jordan. The Jordanian Ministry of Social Development assumed responsibility for supervising and monitoring the community based credit programs and, 25 years later, all but two are still in operation.

The Jordan team, led by Hajem Halaseh and Majdi Qorom, deliberately engaged local NGOs and government staff in dialogue and site visits to set the course for replication and mainstreaming of this model. The process focused on building the capacity of those organizations and engaging them in developing, implementing, and monitoring the credit systems.

Today, the Ministry of Social Development uses community-based credit to improve access to credit for beneficiaries of the National Aid Fund (a social safety net) who are capable of work, facilitating their engagement in productive activities. The General Union of Voluntary Societies established a special funding window to establish revolving credit funds as a form of financial and technical support for members of their partner community-based organizations. And the Development and Employment Fund, the government arm for promoting small businesses and supporting entrepreneurs, has established a program to fund community-based organizations and structures to replicate the model and establish community-based credit schemes with government and donor financing.

**Lebanon: Vocational Training and Micro-Credit.** While NEF's presence in Lebanon was complicated by the country's civil war, it continued to work through a network of local NGO partners with which it had established relationships. NEF supported non-profit, nonsectarian vocational schools and programs designed to

Using participatory development practices, NEF supported a women's community association in Ajloun, Jordan to start a modern embroidery business to generate revenue for its charitable work, 2005.



address the specific needs of under-served regions and populations. These efforts began with large-scale organizations and programs—such as helping ex-militia reintegrate into society—and over the years shifted to smaller, more targeted projects where modest support could make the greatest difference. In total, eight institutions participated in NEF vocational training programs, which offered training in an array of topics from secretarial skills and computer science to hotel and restaurant management to carpentry, weaving, knitting, and mechanics.

In 1998, NEF launched an initiative to establish micro-credit facilities that provided financial services to low-income families historically excluded from access to credit. The program operated in four rural and peri-urban communities, Zahle, Tripoli, Sidon and Nabatiyeh, representing a religious and geographic cross-section of Lebanese society. Starting with less than \$80,000 in seed money, the initiative eventually made loans exceeding \$750,000, with an overall repayment rate of 92 percent (100 percent from women borrowers). Funds varied from traditional banking to Islamic lending, depending on community preferences. Lending favored widows, refugees, and persons with disabilities. Loans supported a variety of income-generating and small business activities including the establishment of home-based projects, the expansion of small retail shops, street vending, cleaning businesses, and transportation services. Programs were designed not only to increase economic opportunities for participants, but also to strengthen relationships between local civil society organizations and community residents.



**NEF provided vocational training and other support to help people with disabilities, such as these electricians, and many others start small businesses in Lebanon, c. 1990s.**



## **The Near East Foundation at 100**

One hundred years after it was created, NEF continues to serve vulnerable, marginalized, and disenfranchised individuals in the Middle East, Africa, and the Caucasus.



**In rural Armenia, NEF supported entrepreneurs, including this fish farmer, to expand their businesses by providing training and microcredit, 2011. Previous pages: A herder brings goats to water at a livestock well in Mali's Mopti Region, 2013. NEF worked with a pastoral cooperative to restore the water point after it was degraded during northern Mali's occupation by separatists and jihadists.**

The dramatic social and political changes that are reshaping the regions where NEF works create significant new opportunities for participation in civil society, governance, and economic development. At the same time, these shifts are symptomatic of a long history of deep inequalities and marginalization of huge sectors of society. Some people are prospering, while others are left behind. Those who continue to be socially, politically, and economically excluded are not benefitting from new opportunities. Nor are they able to contribute to the development of their communities and countries.

Today, NEF's partners include women, youth, conflict-affected people, refugees, people with disabilities, survivors of gender-based violence and trafficking, people with HIV/AIDs, and other marginalized groups. Its programs are orga-

## Strategic Affiliation with Syracuse University

In 2010, NEF embarked on a move designed to access the creativity and resources of a leading American university, offer opportunities for practical engagement to scores of faculty and students, and reduce the organization's costs in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. NEF moved its headquarters from Manhattan, where the organization had been located for ninety-five years, to the campus of Syracuse University, where it entered into a strategic affiliation with the University. NEF remains wholly independent while engaging the talent and creative energy of the academic community to help solve the problems facing the Middle East and Africa. In turn, NEF is helping train a new generation of students, including interns and student fellows, who will lead the future of international social and economic development.



NEF has worked with dozens of students and faculty since relocating its headquarters to the campus of Syracuse University in 2010. Here, a Syracuse University student, Amy McCluskey, visits eastern Morocco with NEF Project Director Abdelkhalk Aandam to document the impact of NEF's agricultural water management activi-

nized to help these vulnerable groups address their most pressing needs. As it has for the past century, NEF's work focuses on helping people to help themselves.

### KNOWLEDGE, VOICE & ENTERPRISE: NEF'S GUIDING FRAMEWORK

After a century of service, NEF continues to travel the path begun in September 1915. Each year, NEF impacts thousands of lives through pioneering community-driven programs in microenterprise development, civic engagement and education, agriculture and natural resource management, climate change adaptation,



NEF works to promote economic inclusion in communities throughout the region. With NEF training and support, this Nablus wheelchair manufacturing and repair facility became self-sustaining. It is managed by the people with disabilities who work there, and it continues to operate independently today. Photo c. 2008.

and peacebuilding through economic cooperation. Building upon its long history and extensive network in the region, NEF remains faithful to its original model for development: cooperation with local partners and technical innovation adapted to local context to help people build more sustainable and prosperous communities. While NEF no longer frames its work in terms of the “four essentials of civilization,” it remains committed to holistic ap-

proaches that supports not only survival, but also economic security, mental and physical health, education, social equity, political empowerment, and peace.

NEF is committed to carrying out its programs in a manner that sustains people’s aspirations, autonomy, and dignity. It employs community-based, participatory approaches to development, involving local partners in initial need assessments, identification of priorities, program design, and implementation. It encourages inclusivity and works to build the resilience and capacity of individuals, local civil society organizations, institutions, and governments.

Nearly all NEF staff in each country is from the country or region in which they work. Their understanding of context and deep relationships allow NEF to help communities identify needs and develop strategies for addressing them.

Based on NEF’s experience, it has come to understand that many of the obstacles that hinder vulnerable and disadvantaged people revolve around their access to three related opportunities: Knowledge, Voice, and Enterprise. This understanding informs NEF’s strategies and underpins its work.

**Knowledge.** Without basic knowledge, urban and rural poor alike have little prospect to advance their chances of self-improvement. Their poverty and vulnerability to exploitation persists—often while society around them prospers. NEF education and training programs offer access to the basic knowledge needed to engage civic and economic opportunities.

**Voice.** Many of NEF’s local partners have been excluded from public decision-



making due to poverty, lack of education, gender or cultural norms, or geographic isolation. They have no seat at the table, and their lack of political power is both cause and effect of vulnerability. NEF helps establish and strengthen local organizations to take collective action and effectively amplify the voice of their members.

**Enterprise.** NEF works with both the chronically poor and the newly dispossessed. The people NEF work with seek economic autonomy, but often lack opportunity—conditions that result from and are exacerbated by development deficits, conflict, displacement, environmental degradation, and a lack of social and political equity. NEF supports its partners to achieve economic independence through business development, micro-finance, micro-enterprise, and improved agricultural and natural resource management. The approach is customized to the social and economic realities of the local communities. In each case, NEF provides technical assistance to improve productivity, job skills and business development training along with micro-credit to help vulnerable people earn a meaningful living and lift themselves out of poverty.

Radio broadcasts in Central Darfur give community leaders the opportunity to share their experience with collaborative natural resource management and peacebuilding. Here, a Radio Nyala journalist interviews a member of a supra-village association that communities created with NEF support. Sudan, 2013.

## PROGRAMS TODAY

Guided by this framework for action, NEF concentrates its current efforts in four key program areas: (a) peace-building through reconciliation, economic cooperation, and development; (b) improvement of food security and livelihoods through sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, and climate change adaptation; (c) building economic and social resilience among vulnerable women through microenterprise development; (d) improving the participation of young people in the civic life of their communities and countries.

### **Building Peace in Conflict-affected Communities through Reconciliation, Economic Cooperation & Development**

NEF has helped communities in Central Darfur significantly increase agricultural production, enabling the recovery of the local economy and the peaceful return of displaced people. These Darfuri women, who participate in a NEF farm learning group, were able to increase their yield of vegetables for market, 2013.

Conflict is a backdrop to daily life in many of the communities where NEF works. Poverty is often a significant underlying cause and almost always a consequence. NEF's programs aim to create new pathways for peace and to demonstrate possibilities for moving forward in areas of entrenched conflict.

NEF helps populations find mutual interests and benefits through economic cooperation. By focusing on livelihoods, NEF frames conflict mitigation and reconciliation with practical and immediate concerns for average citizens. This takes different forms depending on the causes and consequences of conflict—including economic sector development,

economic reintegration and inclusion, and collaborative natural resource management.

NEF uses the tools of economic development, along with livelihood and conflict management training, to promote reconciliation between opposing groups, integrate “at-risk” populations (e.g., young people in peri-urban slums, ex-combatants, internally displaced people), and to combat poverty. The target countries for this work are Palestine, Sudan, and northern Mali.







NEF's programs often draw upon the expertise of faculty in Syracuse University's Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration.

In the West Bank, NEF's long-standing relationships with dozens of Palestinian communities laid the foundation for an innovative, market-based initiative to promote reconciliation between Palestinian and Israeli farmers and businesspeople. This groundbreaking approach was the inspiration of Country Director Salah Abu Eishah and his team in the West Bank. Using a value chain approach, NEF is working with hundreds of leaders in the sector to develop a shared vision for the olive sector, upgrade the industry, and address structural barriers to col-

**Clockwise from top: Israeli and Palestinian farmers gather to learn and share experience at a modern Israeli farm, 2013; an icebreaker between Palestinian and Israeli youth lays a foundation for working together to start agricultural businesses, 2013; a Palestinian lead farmer hauls his harvest to mill using improved techniques learned from NEF, 2011.**



Seed fairs like this one in Central Darfur enable farmers to access high quality seeds and tools while jumpstarting local markets post-conflict, 2012.

laboration. NEF is harnessing the market to promote “win-win” relationships to create incentives for ongoing cooperation and reconciliation.

One of the major successes of this work was the negotiation of an agreement between the Palestinian and Israeli governments that opened the border to olive oil trade for the first time since the Second Intifada. In 2013, Palestinian farmers were able to sell 3,600 tons of olive oil in Israel, generating a total of \$20 million in new income.

Building on this success, NEF launched a second three-year project with USAID support to help more than 100 Palestinian and Israeli youth start collaborative, cross-border agricultural businesses.

In Darfur, NEF has brought together communities that were previously in conflict to help them implement large-scale projects to improve natural resource productivity and provide a platform for communication and collaboration. Even while violent inter-tribal conflict has spiked in other communities in Central Darfur, the NEF communities reported stability and peace—in spite of having been selected because of their history of conflict. Local groups established and trained with NEF’s help successfully managed major inter-group conflicts and

prevented escalation. These local groups are the first inclusive, independent governing structures created to support recovery and peace in Central Darfur. Country Director Musa Gismalla navigates the complexities of accomplishing this work in a highly volatile area.

### **Improving Food Security and Livelihoods through Sustainable Agriculture, Natural Resource Management & Climate Change Adaptation**

One of the most vulnerable groups in the Middle East and northern Africa is smallholder farmers. They are on the frontlines of climate change yet often lack access to the information, tools, and infrastructure to adapt. NEF supports smallholder farmers and other natural resource-dependent populations (e.g., herders, fishers) through a variety of initiatives to improve food security and increase incomes.

NEF programs in this area focus on development and efficient use of productive resources, with an emphasis on efficient use of water resources—harnessing nonconventional water resources, such as rainwater harvesting, spring catchment, and wastewater reuse, introducing water-efficient crops and farming practices, and adopting improved irrigation technologies. Beyond achieving short-term gains, the goal is to help develop the local capacity and infrastructure to manage agriculture and natural resources sustainably in the long-term. Projects utilize scenario-based planning for resilient agricultural development and natural resource management. NEF's work in this area targets the Palestinian Territories, Sudan, Mali, and Morocco.

Building on 30 years of work in northern Mali, following the 2012 coup d'état



**With NEF support and micro-credit, this Malian restaurateur was able to restart her business after her restaurant was ransacked by occupying rebels, 2014.**



**Kaadi Tangara, a rice farmer in Bagui, Mali, partnered with NEF to replace his earthen irrigation system with concrete-lined channels—a measure that has reduced his water and crop losses and increased productivity, 2013.**

and subsequent occupation, NEF efforts focused on rebuilding livelihoods and recovering lost productive assets. In two years, NEF helped 58,000 farm families reestablish agriculture through access to seeds, restoration of irrigation systems, market gardening, fish farming, pasture regeneration, and water point rehabilitation. NEF has supported more than 3,500 small entrepreneurs to reestablish their disrupted businesses through grants and micro-credit.

NEF in Mali also continues its work with local governments to build their capacity to manage the threats associated with climate change. Country Director Yacouba Dème, a recognized leader working at the intersection of natural resources management, governance, and climate change, leads this work.

In Morocco, an agricultural water management program is helping farmers find collaborative solutions to water scarcity. With training in conflict management, communication, and water management strategies, communities are building their capacity to work together to peacefully address challenges and wisely use scarce resources.

In Sudan, NEF has pioneered efforts to build peace and economic security in Darfur by improving community management of natural resources — the root cause of most conflicts in the war-torn region. NEF engaged the full range of community members—from nomadic herders to farmers and tribal leaders — and helped them create solutions to the natural resources and land issues that impact their livelihoods. These short- and long-term solutions foster peace and facilitate resource-sharing to benefit all residents.

### **Building Economic & Social Resilience among Vulnerable Women through Microenterprise Development**

Throughout the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Africa, women are assuming increasing economic responsibility for their families. In spite of the necessity, they must overcome social barriers, lack of job skills or business management experi-



Clockwise from top: A Palestinian woman in the West Bank village of Salfeet, Khadija Shamlawi, stands in the doorway of her clothing shop, which she started with NEF support, 2012. Women in a cooperative in Figuig, Morocco make couscous, 2012; the cooperative expanded its production and marketing efforts with NEF support. A Palestinian woman in Assira, West Bank produces tomatoes in her new greenhouse; NEF helped her devise a business plan and provided start up funds, 2013.



**An Iraqi refugee, who is the sole breadwinner for her family, earns income by making and repairing clothes for others in her community, 2013. Through financial assistance, training, and mentoring, NEF is helping refugees and poor women in Jordan and Lebanon to support themselves and their families.**

ence, and little access to credit. NEF has found that microenterprise development is among the most effective and accessible ways to create jobs and income for disadvantaged women in the region.

Working in partnership with local community associations, NEF promotes the economic independence and social resilience of vulnerable women—including rural and urban poor, heads of households, widows, refugees, and victims of domestic violence. NEF programs use the tools of entrepreneurship and business management, microcredit, mentoring, and development of peer networks to provide both business and social support. NEF programs in this area operate in Armenia, Egypt, Lebanon, Mali, Jordan, and the Palestinian Territories.

In Jordan, NEF has worked with community-based organizations in Zarqa to help hundreds of Jordanians and Iraqi and Syrian refugees—women and youth—launch small businesses and income-generating activities to achieve self-sufficiency. To date, with the support of ongoing coaching and networking, the success rate

of these new enterprises has been 100 percent. The initiative is one of the first projects in the country to utilize the tools of economic development to help refugee women and youth safely earn a living. Country Director Anis Tarabey has ushered the program through a sensitive approval and coordination process and oversees its successful implementation. In 2015, NEF expanded this program to work with women and youth in Lebanon.

In Armenia, under the leadership of Country Director Arpine Baghdoyan, NEF is using economic development to help survivors of domestic violence gain independence from their abusive environments. In 2014, this first-of-its-kind pilot initiative in the country reached 50 women, all of whom had sought refuge in a Yerevan shelter. Based on the model's success, the program expanded in size and geography with funding from the European Union (through NEF's affiliate, Near East Foundation UK).

In Mali, NEF has provided micro-credit to rural women in the Region of Mopti since the early 1990s. NEF created an independent, women-managed micro-finance institution, Nayral NEF, which has lent \$8.3 million to more than 40,000 women since 1998 to help them establish small enterprises. Nayral-NEF maintains seven branch offices, serving 90 villages in the most inaccessible parts of the Region of Mopti. As of July 2014, there were 4,218 active borrowers (71 percent women) in 18 rural communes. At that time, the active loan portfolio was 374,450,817 FCFA (\$756,466).



**Top:** A fish seller in Konna, Mali, was able to start and expand her business with micro-credit from NEF's Nayral microfinance institution, 2013; **Bottom:** Young Egyptian women study to become nurses in NEF's award-winning nursing education program, 2004.

## **Near East Foundation United Kingdom**

The Near East Foundation United Kingdom (NEF-UK) was created in 2012 to advance the shared values and mission of the Near East Foundation. NEF-UK and NEF share a common mission and approach to build more sustainable, prosperous, and inclusive communities in the Middle East and Africa through education, community organizing, and economic development. Guided by an independent board of directors and led by a London-based program manager, Rabih Yazbeck, NEF-UK is an important member of the family of entities of the Near East Foundation. In the brief time since its creation, NEF UK has gained the support of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, the European Union, and the Big Lottery Fund and now leads multi-year projects in Armenia, Morocco, and the Palestinian Territories.

In Egypt, a NEF nursing program (2001-2008) created jobs for 600 women while working to improve curriculum and teaching in 15 nursing schools and the quality of care in 25 hospitals in Upper Egypt. Impoverished, unemployed young women advanced their education and built a career in nursing—earning a reliable income while helping to address Egypt’s nursing shortage. In recognition of this work, NEF was awarded the AgFund International Prize for Pioneering Development Projects in 2004.

### **Improving the Participation of Young People in the Civic Life of their Communities and Countries**

Youth have a vested interest in building a region that’s more inclusive and opportunity-rich. Yet their exclusion from civic and economic life is one of the key factors that has driven the Arab Spring and other reform movements across the region. NEF invests in underserved youth to help them overcome economic and social barriers. It works with youth and community organizations to find practical ways to constructively address real problems in their community, including unemployment, environmental degradation, and safety. NEF works through civil society groups to recruit, train, and organize young leaders and to champion actions that address youth priorities—particularly employment, which is the major preoccupation in areas where NEF currently works. NEF has partnered with the Syracuse University Maxwell School to bring public administration and gover-





nance expertise to some projects in this area. Target countries for NEF's work are Morocco, Egypt, the Palestinian Territories, and Lebanon.

Thousands of vulnerable urban youth in Egypt, who live on the street or work to provide income for their families, benefitted from NEF efforts to improve the quality of their health and wellbeing. In poor communities across Egypt, children and young adults participated in training in life skills and leadership, and gained improved knowledge of health and sexuality to prevent their exploitation. NEF-trained professional and peer counselors provide continuing support services to youth through dedicated counseling centers established through the project.

In Egypt, NEF worked with youth in urban areas around Cairo to build their capacity for grassroots organizing to address concerns in their community, participate in the democratic process, and promote volunteerism.

In Morocco, NEF helped establish Youth Councils in nine Moroccan towns and helped almost 1,000 young people engage their local governments to plan and implement community improvement projects. Work with the Youth Councils continues today under the leadership of Country Director Mahmoud Bchini. NEF works through the Councils to create businesses and jobs for youth through entrepreneurship training, business incubators, start-up grants, and microfinance. The program was designed to address the top priority identified by Moroccan youth: jobs.

**In Sefrou, Morocco, Youth Council members organize community outreach events to engage young people in civic life. Here, the group poses in front of a graffiti mural they painted on the wall of the municipal youth center, 2013.**



## Looking Forward

Conditions that disrupt people's lives, including conflict, poverty, discrimination, and environmental degradation, have been with us forever. NEF began its programs during a time when all of these problems wreaked havoc on innocent people in the Middle East. In the intervening century, these conditions have only become more complex and intractable.

Previous pages: In Mali's Mopti Region, children stand in a rice field restored with NEF support. The once productive field had degraded when insecurity during the 2012 occupation prevented its use and maintenance.

**Poverty.** At one time, abject poverty was the norm in many communities in the Middle East and Africa. There have been dramatic improvements, but large pockets of poverty persist. People who lack skills and education are unable to access economic opportunities. Often, there is a huge gap between urban and rural populations in terms of access to education, civic life, and economic opportunity—a gap that has grown since NEF first began its work. Women and youth in particular are often excluded from economic opportunities and decision-making.

**Climate Change.** When NEF began its technical assistance work in the 1920s and 1930s, we confronted environmental problems on a relatively small scale (e.g., sanitation). Today, the principal environmental threat in the region—climate change — is vastly more complex. The uncertainty around future climate scenarios and impacts gives rise to uncertainty about how to best support adaptation to improve resilience. Affected communities must have a voice in developing strategies to ensure that climate solutions support local needs, incorporate indigenous knowledge, and protect against future climate shocks.

**Conflict.** In 1915, World War I and the rise and decline of various political authorities and interests leveled communities in the Near East. In the time since, the regions where NEF works have undergone tectonic shifts. To name just a few, in the past century NEF's partners have been impacted by World War II, the rise and fall of the Soviet Union, political reorganization of the Middle East, persistent instability associated with the Arab-Israeli conflict, genocide in Darfur, and the Arab Spring. Most recently, the civil war in Syria has caused massive displacements and untold suffering among the Syrian people. The conflict, which shows no signs of abating, has shaken the fragile stability that remains in the region.



NEF continues to work among conflict-affected people. Today, the Syrian crisis rages into its fifth year, creating one of the greatest humanitarian crises of our time. In Sudan, despite a recent referendum that resulted in the creation of a new country, conflicts persist and there remain over 2 million internally displaced persons. In Mali, a 2012 coup, rebellion, and occupation by jihadists caused widespread internal displacements. The Palestinian Territories witness



nearly-perennial conflict.

These conflicts result in homelessness, disability, and destitution — and they contribute to a huge number of refugees that remain in exile for years. Nearly two-thirds of the world’s refugees — over six million people — are in protracted refugee situations, and the period of displacement lasts longer than it has in the past. Refugees remain in exile for 20 years, on average—a figure that has risen from 9 years in the early 1990s.<sup>44</sup>

After 100 years, NEF remains committed to supporting recovery and building resilience by enabling people to access tools and resources to improve their own lives. It recognizes that people can—and do—earn a living during conflict and displacement and that supporting conflict-affected people and other marginalized groups to safely earn income can be a life-saving measure.

As such, NEF programs adapt economic development solutions to crisis- and conflict-affected people. NEF’s work with Iraqi and Syrian refugees in Jordan and

**With training and assistance from NEF, this young Iraqi refugee produces handcrafted metalwork to support his family. Jordan, 2013.**

internally displaced people in Mali and Sudan has proven that vulnerable people in these communities can leverage economic assistance to improve their own well-being and resilience. Livelihood opportunities for crisis- and conflict-affected people not only save lives, but also help to preserve dignity, autonomy, and safety.



**Youth leaders discuss strategies for community mobilization in Cairo's Imbaba neighborhood, 2012. In the wake of Egypt's 2011 revolution, NEF worked with youth groups to help them organize constructive solutions to community problems.**

The issues of marginalization and vulnerability have grown more complex since NEF first began working. While there has been tremendous global progress, some people have been left behind and remain unable to access economic or social opportunities in their communities. With increasingly complex global politics and an operational environment that is constantly in flux, it can be difficult to determine solutions.

The problems of poverty, conflict, and environmental degradation yield similar obstacles today as they did 100 years ago, and history has proven that these are

recurrent conditions in the region. But these problems are now part of a world order that can be difficult to interpret and address, particularly as an outsider.

The complexity and uncertainty of the modern world underscores the importance of local staff, long-term commitments, deep relationships, and a community-led approach that are at the heart of NEF's work to promote people's self-sufficiency, resilience, and ability to participate in the economic and civic development of their own communities and countries.





## Geography of NEF's Work

**In its first century, NEF worked in nearly fifty countries.**

Afghanistan	Chad	Iran	Mali	Swaziland
Albania	Cote d'Ivoire	Iraq	Mauritania	Syria
Armenia	Cyprus	Jordan	Mauritius	Tanzania
Benin	Djibouti	Kenya	Morocco	Togo
Bhutan	Egypt	Korea	Niger	Turkey
Botswana	Eritrea	Lebanon	Nigeria	Uganda
Bulgaria	Ethiopia	Lesotho	Palestinian Territories	Yemen
Burkina Faso	Gambia	Libya	Saudi Arabia	Yugoslavia
Cameroon	Georgia	Madagascar	Senegal	Zambia
Central African Republic	Ghana	Malawi	Sudan	

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50,000  
NEAR EAST RELIEF  
ORPHANS  
GREET YOU

