The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was established on 9 November 1943, as the first service agency of the United Nations. In 1946 it was composed of 48 member governments, each of which participated in UNRRA’s policy-making Council. Nine governments - the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, China, France, Canada, Australia, Brazil and Yugoslavia - were also represented on the Central Committee, which was empowered to make emergency policy decisions between sessions of the Council. Executive responsibility was vested in the Director General, assisted by his staff, composed of over 12,000 persons and some 30 different nationalities. Mr. Herbert H. Lehman served as Director General from the inception of the Administration until his resignation, for reasons of health, in March, 1946. He was succeeded by Mr. F. H. LaGuardia.

UNRRA was organized to provide relief and rehabilitation to the people of liberated territories in Europe and the Far East, concentrating primarily on assisting those nations without adequate foreign exchange resources to finance their own relief imports. This assistance consisted of relief supplies - food, clothing, fuel, medicines; relief services - health and welfare services, repatriation of displaced persons; and rehabilitation supplies and services - seeds, fertilizers, insecticides, basic farm tools, repair parts for the rehabilitation of industry, transportation, and other public utilities, and raw materials.

To finance these supplies and services, each member country not occupied by the enemy was asked to contribute one percent of its national income for the year ending 30 June 1943. Later, it was asked to make a second contribution.
in the same amount. Meanwhile, all countries, invaded and uninvaded alike, contributed proportionately to UNRRA's administrative budget. As of 31 July 1946, the total operating and administrative contributions authorized by UNRRA's member governments amounted to $3,691,866,918. The total amounts subscribed by the three largest contributors were: United States, $2,700,000,000; United Kingdom, $624,650,000; and Canada, $138,738,739.

After a period of planning and training, UNRRA took over relief operations from the military in Greece on 1 April 1945, and in Yugoslavia on 15 April 1945. V-E Day paved the way for increasing supplies and shipping to meet the needs of liberated countries in Europe. V-J Day made possible relief and rehabilitation operations on a global basis.

In 1946, UNRRA was providing general relief aid to the following countries: Albania, Austria, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, China, Czechoslovakia, the Dodecanese Islands, Greece, Italy, Poland, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and Yugoslavia. Programs of limited emergency aid were in effect on behalf of Finland, Hungary, and the Philippines, and a special program was being operated to help Ethiopia in the fields of medicine, welfare and transport.

In 1946, UNRRA personnel assisted the military in the care of upwards of a million displaced persons, and administered hundreds of displaced persons assembly centers. However, overall responsibility for the displaced persons operations in Germany and Austria belonged to the military authorities, who provided the basic supplies and transportation.

The acceleration of UNRRA's operation was borne out by the following cumulative statistics of supplies shipped overseas:
Operations in 1946 were seriously affected by the critical world food shortage. UNRRA was unable to obtain sufficient allocations of bread grains to meet its minimum overseas commitments during the first half of the year. The fourth session of the UNRRA Council, held in March, 1946, underscored the necessity of the supplying and receiving countries to take all possible measures to conserve and make available more food to avert widespread famine in Europe and the Far East. Mr. LaGuardia, elected Director General at this session, devoted most of his time in the succeeding months to overcoming the food shortage. He also called attention to the necessity of finding a permanent solution to the displaced persons problem in Europe.

Extraordinary efforts on the part of the major wheat-growing countries and the arrival of harvests in liberated areas materially eased the food crisis in the last half of 1946, although UNRRA officials warned that the danger of hunger would remain at least through 1947.

The UNRRA Council held its fifth session at Geneva in August, 1946, principally to adopt policies regarding the termination of the organization and the transfer of its remaining functions to permanent international bodies. Among the resolutions adopted were:

1. The transfer of UNRRA’s major health activities to the World Health Organization or its Interim Commission.

2. The authorization of the transfer to the United Nations of such social welfare functions as the United Nations desire to undertake.
3. The continuation of displaced persons operations until undertaken by the International Refugee Organization, or by any other appropriate body, provided that none of these operations were to be continued by UNRRA after 30 June 1947.

4. The rehabilitation of children and adolescents of liberated countries by the creation of an International Children's Fund to which such assets would be transferred as the Central Committee might determine to be available after completion of the work of UNRRA.

5. The recommendation that the General Assembly of the United Nations establish the appropriate agency, or agencies, to review the needs in 1947 for financing urgent imports of the basic essentials of life, after the termination of UNRRA programs, and to recommend the financial assistance required to meet such future relief needs.