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ANERA 25 years of service Newsletter

American Near East Refugee Aid

Number 117 Summer 1997

“For many years the environment was regarded by some Middle East states as a luxury that would be dealt with once economic development had been achieved. But environmental issues are not only compatible with economic development and social welfare, they are essential to both of them.” Philip Warburg is passionate about this latter point. He directs Resources for a Sustainable Environment, a Jerusalem-based law and policy center devoted to environmental protection in the Middle East. By working with the Palestinian Authority, the Government of Jordan and Israeli non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to help devise ecologically sound policies and laws, Warburg is exceptionally well-positioned to monitor ways in which environmental concerns have evolved in the region.

He points out, for example, that in Israel the very rapid rate of economic development and population growth have put environmental issues on the public agenda. In Jordan such issues

The Green Bottomline



Environmental Issues
in the Middle East: an Interview

have risen considerably in public visibility and have captured the government’s attention. This was in part due to the support and financial help that international agencies have provided for both the institutional development of local environmental watchdogs, and for the physical construction of key infrastructural projects.

Warburg also believes that NGOs such as EcoPeace (see separate article below) have an important role to play in addressing transboundary environmental problems. He has agreed to further share his views on this subject in an interview with ANERA.

What are the most important environmental issues in the Middle East, and are countries trying to address them?

The most obvious concern in the Middle East is water scarcity. Another crucial issue — population growth — must be addressed sooner or later. Every environmental issue facing the

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An Environment for Peace

On a hot, mid-September day two years ago, children from Israel, Jordan and Egypt gathered together along their respective shorelines at the Gulf of Aqaba. Their mission: beach clean-up. It wasn’t all work though. In Eilat, a contest to turn garbage into art and costumes gave a new dimension to the word “recycling.” In Aqaba, Princess Basma Ali joined divers to find underwater rubbish. In Sharm el-Sheikh, youth groups pounded the pavement (and sands) to raise public awareness about the entire affair. What could motivate the people of these three

countries, not known for their willingness to cooperate, to come together for such an event? A common desire for an *environment of peace*.

The Gulf of Aqaba initiative was masterminded by EcoPeace, a group created to preserve the environment across political and national boundaries. Founded in 1994 with support from ANERA, EcoPeace is the first organization to bring Israeli, Jordanian, Palestinian, and Egyptian environmental groups together. Their conviction: that in order for peace to be attainable *and* sustain-

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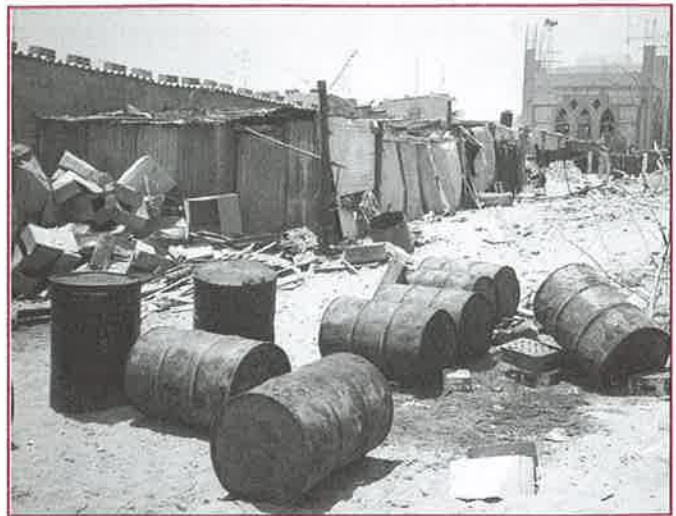
Middle East today, whether water scarcity or land-use related problems, contains a population dimension. Population growth in Israel, Palestine, Jordan and other parts of the region is very high by global standards and not sustainable from a regional environmental perspective. But the reluctance to address problems of demographic growth stems from very profound religious and national considerations. In comparison, the issue of water looks somehow brighter.

In what sense?

For decades now there have been concerted efforts to develop water conservation strategies in Jordan, Israel, and — to a lesser degree — in the West Bank and Gaza. However, one of the temptations of the peace process is to give priority to large-scale infrastructure building projects in order to enhance water supply capabilities. This happens to the detriment of less glamorous but essential investments in agricultural reforms that would save substantial quantities of water.

Many environmental issues cross the borders of nation states. Given the history of enmity among Middle Eastern countries, how can these cross-border issues be addressed?

Some issues are more easily addressed than others. Early in the peace process, for example, a Multilateral Working Group on the Environment was established. Within this group, protecting the Gulf of Aqaba emerged as one of the earliest centers of focus because economic development of the area — mainly through tourism — clearly depends on the effectiveness of efforts to preserve the Gulf's coral reefs and other marine life. A direct outgrowth of the peace process is the Red Sea Marine Peace Park between Israel and Jordan, now in the



"The continuity of donors' support is crucial to the protection of the environment in the Middle East."

process of being established. Other regional issues are more difficult to address with coherent and shared approaches because of the uncertain political situation. Until the territorial boundaries between Israel and the West Bank are clearly defined, it will be quite hard to tackle — in a mutually satisfactory way — water management and protection concerns that are essential to Israeli-Palestinian co-existence.

How can donors help stimulate progress in these areas?

One important consideration that donor countries must keep in mind is the continuity of their support. This support is often of a very short term nature, and it is unlikely that institutional continuity would be possible if donor agencies' support were withdrawn or reduced. ■

by Loretta Bondi



The Taming of the Pest

When new technology is introduced in the developing world, it is sometimes overused. An example of this is pesticides used in agriculture. Farmers in the Jordan Valley and Gaza, where intensive, irrigated tillage is practiced, frequently use three or four times the recommended

amount of pesticides, a mistake that can jeopardize both the quality of their produce and their own health. To address this problem, ANERA supported the development of Birzeit University's integrated pest management program. Now, through a public information and education campaign, farmers are advised on the proper methods of pesticide use. In addition, the program is introducing alternative insect control methods such as fine mesh netting and the use of natural predators that kill destructive insects. These innovative methods help farmers raise their produce more cost-effectively, and are friendlier to the environment and safer for the community.



...And the Hills Will be Alive

During the nineteenth century, many of the hills of Palestine, Jordan, and Syria were stripped of their trees by an increasing population. After decolonization, countries like Jordan undertook extensive reforestation programs. The Wadi al-Quf Reforestation

Nursery was the center of this effort in the West Bank. After the 1967 war, however, progress halted. In 1995, ANERA set out to revitalize the nursery in cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture. The project, now completed, involved the construction and rehabilitation of three cisterns, and the installation of a modern sprinkle irrigation system for watering up to 400,000 tree seedlings per year. Today, workers carefully transfer tiny seedlings to bags of fresh dirt. Following one year in the nursery, young saplings will be ready for planting in the West Bank hills.

Peace, continued from page 1

able, all sides must view the land as a geographic body, not a political one. EcoPeace sponsors scientific studies, leads open discussion panels, and coordinates on-the-ground projects.

Its scope of action covers the shared ecosystems of the region from the south eastern Mediterranean coast to the desert plains beyond the Rift Valley of Jordan. For example, EcoPeace is promoting a joint Palestinian and Israeli planning authority for tourism development along the Dead Sea. By pushing a more comprehensive, borderless approach, the organization is working to balance the economy's need for tourism with the need to protect the Sea's environmental heritage. EcoPeace is also concerned with protecting the health of children. Recently they supported a study to detect the presence of lead in the blood of Gazan children.

EcoPeace hopes to expand its membership to include other countries in the Middle East. ANERA will continue to support the efforts of this extraordinary group. ■

by Robert Mosrie

Scholarship Information

If you would like to provide a key one-year scholarship at one of the six schools in the ANERA scholarship program, please use the coupon below.



Rawdat El-Zalhur

A Tribute to Frances Neely

We at ANERA would like to join the friends and family of Frances Neely in their remembrance of her, and to thank her for her deep and lasting partnership in our work for peace and justice in the Middle East. We offer our condolences to those whom she has left behind. Frances was an inspiration in many ways to those around her. Her studies in history, economics, and political science were the foundation for an accomplished career working for social justice issues at home and abroad. Frances' breadth of interests ranged from disarmament to civil rights, from Native Americans to the people of the Middle East. Through a most generous bequest, she chose ANERA as a vehicle for carrying on, beyond her own lifetime, her support for Palestinians and

her particular concern for the women and children of Gaza and the West Bank. We are most honored by her gift and cannot thank her enough. Frances' generosity, her deep humanity, marvelous spirit, keen intelligence, sense of purpose and wonderful work will be remembered for a long time. ■



Stocks Appreciated

Thanks to our many donors who have responded to the opportunity to make gifts of appreciated stocks to ANERA. These gifts are crucial for our work and have major tax advantages. Such gifts can be arranged by check or direct transfer. For further details please contact Nina Dodge, Director, Major Gifts.

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ANERA's Peace Plan: Looking Ahead

Through ANERA's monthly giving program, ANERA's Peace Plan, you can be a part of the solution to the currently troubled peace efforts in the Middle East. If you can contribute a modest monthly donation, please consider joining our electronic giving program. Your ongoing commitment will provide a steady, year-round stream of resources to support peace through ANERA's economic and community development, education, and health programs.

Here's how you can join. Decide how much you would like to contribute. Then send us the

coupon and your check for your first monthly gift. We take care of the rest. Each month your bank will automatically deduct the amount from your account and send it to ANERA. Donations will be clearly listed on your bank statement. Of course you are under no obligation. You can choose to change or cancel your donation at any time.

Not only does the plan make donating to ANERA quick and easy, it also helps to lower ANERA's administrative overhead costs.

You will be amazed at the difference a personal commitment like this can make. ■

Yes, I want to join ANERA's Peace Plan.

Here is my monthly gift of: \$54 \$36 \$27 \$14 \$10 Other \$ _____

I authorize my bank to transfer the amount above from my account each month. A record of each contribution will appear on my bank statement and serve as my receipt. I understand that I may stop my contribution at any time, by contacting ANERA at 1522 K. St., NW, Suite 202, Washington, DC 20005-1270, (202) 347-2558, or my bank.

Signature _____ Date _____

I have enclosed a check for my first monthly contribution, made payable to ANERA. 

In Memory of Jim Knight

With great sadness, we pay tribute to James Vincent Knight, who lost his life to cancer on June 3RD, 1997. Jim, through his work as vice president of ARAMCO and as chairman of the Musa Alami Foundation of North America (which later became the Arab Development Society Committee of ANERA), was a great friend of the poor and the victims of the conflict in Palestine and Lebanon. His love and concern for the Middle East and generous support for ANERA will not be forgotten. On behalf of those he helped throughout his life, ANERA offers its condolences. Our hearts go out to Jim's wife, Anne, and his family. ■

SPECIAL PROJECT GIFTS

Would you consider joining a growing group of ANERA donors by making a special project gift to ANERA, or a gift of appreciated stock? For details contact Nina Dodge.

ANERA

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