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Education for Refugee Teens in Lebanon

The Syrian crisis is entering its fifth year with no end in sight. The plight of more than one million refugees in Lebanon is worsening as economic and academic institutions struggle to cope with the population surge that is straining already weakened resources.

One of the most vulnerable groups is a growing number of adolescent refugees who are falling between the cracks. The Lebanese school system in the best of circumstances can only accommodate 30% of the country's refugees. Organizations like UNRWA have set up schools in refugee camps, but their focus is largely on younger students. Sadly, Palestinian refugees from Syria between the ages of 15 and 18 are disproportionately underserved — only 6% in this demographic attend school.

Understanding the obstacles

For the majority of these teenagers, schooling was halted for years by war and relocation to a place where living conditions are unstable and the economic situation is dire. Many seek jobs instead of studies to support themselves and their families, believing work is a more valuable use of their time than education. Many also speak of the trauma they experienced and wonder how they can focus on school when their family members are dead or dying.

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COVER PHOTO: ANERA organized a life skills workshop for teens in Nahr El Bared Camp in Lebanon as part of the Enhancing Non-Formal Education program in 2013.

If they do go to school in Lebanon, adolescents from Syria have to tackle new curricula and learning subjects in languages often unfamiliar to them. Syrian schools teach in Arabic, while Lebanese schools teach almost exclusively in English or French after the fifth grade. Additionally, transportation and other costs often get in the way of attending school, since most families are lucky to have enough money just for food and shelter.

Meeting the needs of refugee youth

As a leader in non-formal education, ANERA is in a unique position to help youth in Lebanon by providing them with the transferable skills they need to become empowered, productive members of society. A new UNICEF grant is making it possible for us to reach more than 11,000 Syrian, Palestinian, and Lebanese youth with job-skills training that will have an immediate impact and help expand their opportunities in the future.

ANERA's year-long program offers courses in language and math as well as technical skills like soap-making, cooking, office administration and customer service. The classes are designed to appeal to refugees who are unable or unwilling to go to formal school. They are short, intensive and interactive courses. They are also held in the evening, to accommodate work schedules.

Students can also participate in sports activities. ANERA has found that sports foster an environment of inclusion while building, within each child, a sense of personal growth, teamwork, and achievement that can affect all areas of an adolescent's life.

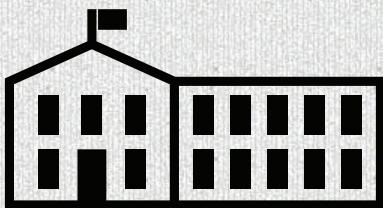
Following a year described as the worst in the Syrian conflict, it is ANERA's duty as a well-connected and flexible humanitarian organization to support the most vulnerable. The stakes are high. We face the prospect of losing a generation to a cycle of violence, poverty, and hopelessness. We cannot give up on the future leaders of society during the most formative years in their lives. They need us, and we are there to help them realize their dreams for a brighter future.

Students graduate from a vocational education class in Lebanon.



Adolescent refugees in Lebanon

By the Numbers



Lebanon has
257 refugees
per 1,000
inhabitants
(the highest
refugee-to-
host ratio in
the world)



41%

of refugee youth
reported they
“often” or
“sometimes”
had thoughts
of suicide.

94%

of Syrian refugees
age 15–24 are not in school.

11,170

Number of young refugees who will have access to
non-formal education through ANERA's new program.

For so many immigrant families in the US, traditions and memories of their homeland are passed from one generation to the next. For the first generation born in the US, family history is made from memories of others. For some, the memories provide a path of generosity. It did for Charles Maria.

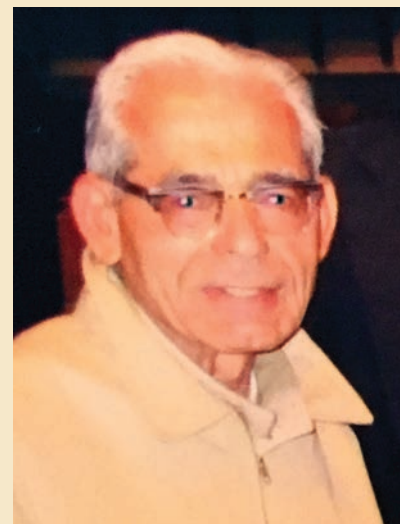
Born in the US in 1926, Mr. Maria's connection to Lebanon, the land of his ancestors, remained within him and so did his desire to help those less fortunate. Sadly, he died in April 2014, but his generosity will live on: he left a bequest of \$1.8 million to ANERA to provide humanitarian assistance to those in need in his parents' homeland and beyond.

Mr. Maria spent most of his childhood in Portland, Maine. He was the third of four children born in the US to Meshel and Emilia Maria who came to America from Tripoli, Lebanon. In the early 1930s, Charles' father took his young family back to Lebanon for a year to give them a chance to meet the extended family and to learn and experience the traditions and culture of his ancestors.

They returned to Maine and Charles went on to study theology at Boston College and to serve two tours in the Korea war. After his tours, Charles studied engineering and had a long career working at the San Diego Water Authority.

Charles led a humble, simple life devoid of material possessions. He dedicated his time to learning and to his Catholic faith, which instructed him to do all he could to care for others.

Charles Maria's generous gift to ANERA will make a difference to countless families in the Middle East for many years to come.



Charles Maria

A Humble Man Leaves a Generous Bequest

Our Community

An Update on ANERA's Work in Gaza

In the streets of Gaza these days, it is rare to see signs of progress and reconstruction in the wake of the 2014 bombings. Only a small number of building materials are getting in, yet so many communities are reduced to rubble. People are losing hope.

ANERA is one of the few organizations making a visible difference, whether it's building infrastructure or delivering shoes. Here are some of the things you have made possible in Gaza over the past few months.

Visit anera.org/gaza to read more about all of these stories.

"Welcoming the winter with new clothes erases some of the bitterness over our harsh reality," says a Gaza grandmother. **ANERA distributed over 3,000 clothing vouchers** to impoverished families in Gaza City, Beit Hanoun, Khan Younis and Rafah.



"We can dive into a world that is rich with endless imagination," says Maisoon, a Beit Lahia teacher. **ANERA delivered 750 bags filled with fun books** to children at six preschools.



"I was shocked by the magnitude of the destruction," Sabra remembers. "No single plant was left." **ANERA helped Sabra and 27 other farmers to restore their agricultural land** by levelling it for planting, and providing saplings and an irrigation system.





ANERA has renovated 6 preschools, making them better and safer learning environments.



"I couldn't believe my eyes when I first saw blue flames coming from the stove!" In an innovative biogas pilot project, **ANERA installed tanks that convert animal manure to cooking fuel** at 15 families' homes. (See story on next page.)



"No words can describe the excitement of having water in my house," exclaims Sabah Shabat, a grandmother of five. Using locally available materials, **ANERA connected 12,000 homes to clean water networks.**



Kareem was severely malnourished, eating mainly bread and tea. After he took vitamins for a couple months, his health greatly improved. **ANERA distributed large quantities of vitamins to 12 charitable hospitals and clinics.**

Biogas Provides Fuel for Families in Gaza

Mariam Ahmad was tired of waiting in long lines to fill up her gas canister, but she didn't have any other option. Cooking gas is in short supply in Gaza. "We waited in long lines to fill our gas tank, sometimes for a whole day, and then were often disappointed because the supply station had run out." She says she had to leave her tank with no guarantee of when it might be filled.



Mariam cooks using the fuel from the biogas digester.



Miriam's grandson holds one of the family's sheep.



Ibrahim and his son stand next to the new digester.

To make do, Mariam and her family would burn wood or plastic sheets for cooking and warmth, knowing full well how unsafe that was. The fire produced toxic gases that are harmful to adults and children alike. Her son Ibrahim Ahmad explains, "It's smoky. It hurts our eyes and makes us cough and choke."

Biogas digester helps rural families cook at no cost

Thanks to ANERA's pilot biogas project, Mariam's future looks a lot brighter. She proudly demonstrates the new mechanism in her kitchen in the central Gaza town of Deir El Balah. Turning a valve on a narrow pipe, she lights a burner on the floor and instantly there is a strong blue flame. "I couldn't believe my eyes when I first saw blue flames coming from the stove."

Mariam's family is one of 15 in Gaza to receive a biogas digester at the end of 2014. Another 13 families in the northern West Bank are also participating in the pilot project.

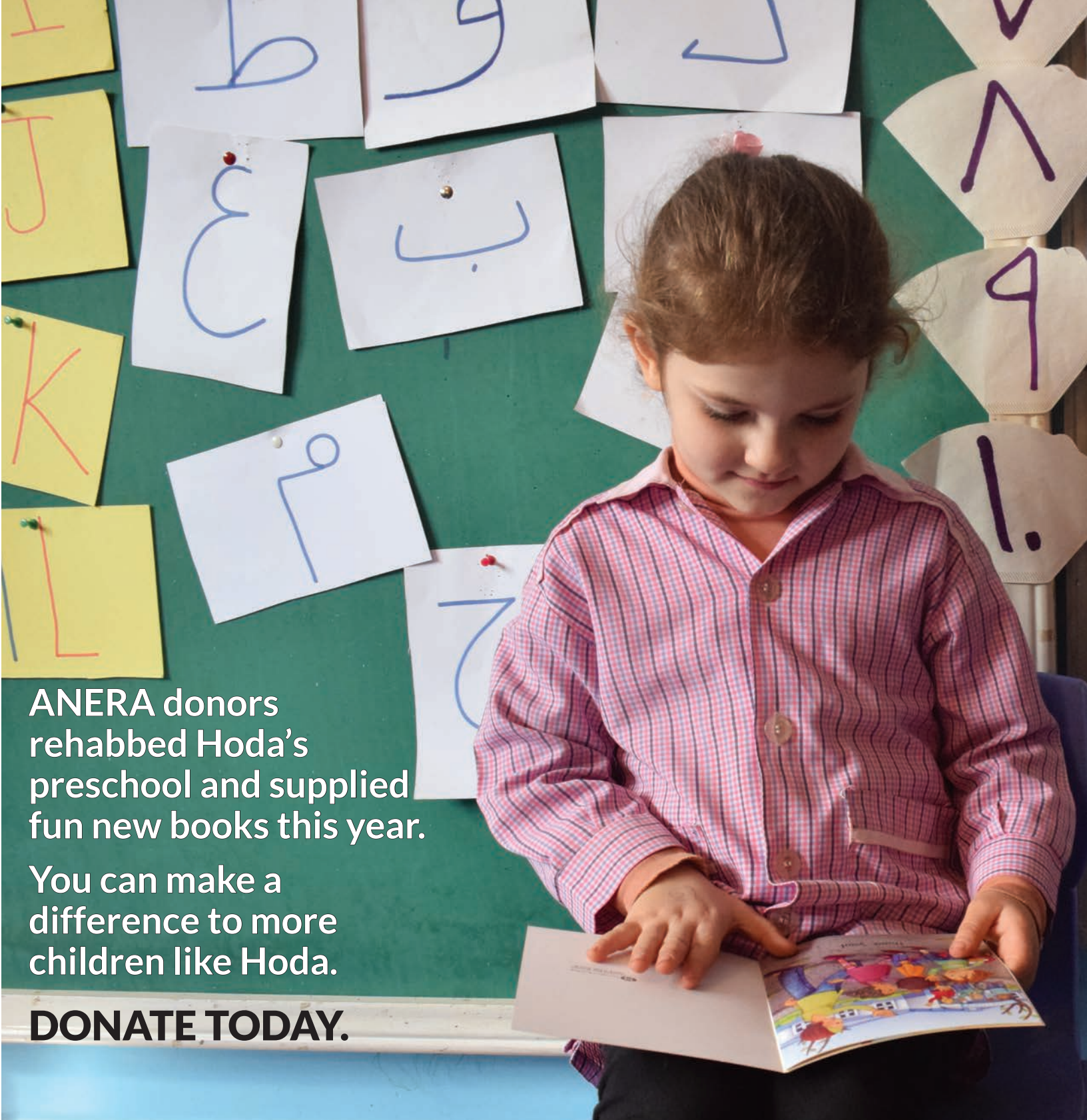
The biogas unit is made up of two locally manufactured plastic tanks, each with a capacity of 1.5 cubic meters (almost 400 gallons). Animal manure mixed with an equal quantity of water is placed in the first tank, while the second tank is inverted inside the first to collect methane gas that is produced, usually within two to three weeks. The mix is blended by the natural warmth and pressure that provokes bacterial fermentation. This allows the methane to be captured and used for household cooking and heating.

At first Mariam's family was unsure if it would work but they were eager to try it since the sheep and chickens they raise could easily provide the fuel. "From here the project idea evolved. We follow the instructions and so far it is working well," she says.

The biogas technology is simple and practical for families living in rural and Bedouin communities where livestock is abundant.

During the winter months Mariam's family is able to use the new stove an average of 30 minutes to three hours a day. Ibrahim explains, "The system will work better in warmer weather."

Ibrahim says the unit is a welcome relief so his family doesn't have to wait in long lines for cooking fuel. "It has eased a huge burden on us. We use it now for all of our family's cooking. And, I like the idea that it is a renewable source of energy at no cost."



ANERA donors
rehabbed Hoda's
preschool and supplied
fun new books this year.

You can make a
difference to more
children like Hoda.

DONATE TODAY.

Save the date!

ANERA's 2015 Annual Dinner

Save the date!

Friday evening, October 2 | Washington Marriott Wardman Park, Washington, DC

Reservations for the event can be made on ANERA's website after June 1.

ANERA

Improving Lives in the Middle East

Since 1968

American Near East Refugee Aid
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Education for Refugee Teens in Lebanon

ANERA NEWS

Spring 2015 | Issue 188

Dear Friend:

As we finish our winter relief programs in the Middle East, ANERA is ramping up some innovative, new activities.

This newsletter brings you up to date on our latest education project in Lebanon: thousands of teenage refugees from Syria, who have lost years of schooling, will be enrolled in language, math and job skills classes. These young people have lost hold of their dreams along with their homes. We hope to give some of them a chance to continue learning and to improve their job prospects.

We also report back on our activities in Gaza. From preschool renovations to animal waste recycling, our Gaza staff is restoring a little dignity and hope for the future in areas most devastated by last summer's bombings.

Thank you for your continued support of programs that not only bring relief but have a meaningful, long-term impact.

Bill Cousen
ANERA President

