



ANERA News

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Childhood Denied?

Sulieman Mleahat, ANERA Education Program Director



Palestinian children are the innocent victims of the economic, social and health conditions around them. Nearly six out of ten families in the West Bank and Gaza live below the United Nations' poverty line. They eke out a living on less than \$2 a day. Malnutrition and ill health badly affect children under five, many of whom suffer from anemia. The stress of their violent surroundings often leads to disrupted schooling, which presents a critical challenge for the future of Palestinian society and leadership.

The most vulnerable are preschoolers at a time when they are developing their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical abilities. Experts say the lack of vital stimulation, health, nutrition, education, and quality care in the early years can compromise the life chances and economic prospects of an entire future generation.

ANERA News

The ANERA newsletter is published quarterly by American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA), a non-profit agency established in 1968 and dedicated to providing development, health, education and employment programs to Palestinian communities and impoverished families throughout the Middle East.

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COVER PHOTO: This budding artist is a student at Ahmed Ben Hanbel in Nablus, West Bank, one of the preschools participating in ANERA's Early Childhood Development Program. © Nada Dajani | ANERA

by the Numbers Early Childhood Education in Gaza

Percent of Gaza's 3-5 year olds attending preschool or kindergarten: **27%**

Number of preschools in Gaza: **230**

Percentage of preschool teachers in Gaza holding an education degree: **3%**

Number of teachers and community workers in Gaza ANERA will train in education through the Palestinian Community Assistance Program (PCAP) grant recently awarded to ANERA: **320**

Number of reading packs that will be produced through ANERA's PCAP-funded reading program in the coming year: **8,400**

Number of children who will have access to these reading packs: **34,000**

Total number of children who will benefit from reading programs and community-based educational activities through PCAP: **170,400**

One Gift Leads to Another

This newsletter issue proudly details and celebrates ANERA's Early Childhood Development program *Right Start!*. The project began a few years ago on a small scale and has recently been awarded a two-year, multi-million dollar grant to expand from the West Bank to Gaza.

But how does a project like *Right Start!* start?

As is so often the case with ANERA projects, it all began with one donor – a person who was and remains committed to strengthening the education of Palestinian children. This person, who has insisted on anonymity, stepped forward to give a gift that would kick-start ANERA's efforts and encourage other gifts as well.

Those initial funds allowed ANERA to conduct assessments, carry out pilot projects, hire Palestinian educational specialists and create the expertise to merit a multi-million dollar grant.

ANERA is grateful for donors who are willing to make that first gift; the gift that gives every project a right start.

THANK YOU



Right Start! in Gaza

ANERA won a \$2.6 million USAID grant, managed by Mercy Corps, for *Right Start!*, a two-year program which will build upon our experience with early childhood development, enhancing the well-being of children in Gaza who are six-years-old and under. ANERA will

- provide preschool teachers, community workers, and parents with the knowledge and skills to foster proper childhood development;
- upgrade and equip preschools and community centers with vital resources and materials to enhance teaching and learning;
- and deliver community-based ECD activities to enable children to learn and thrive.

Right Start! will focus its support on 90 preschools and 25 community centers in Gaza's poorest communities which will affect over 170,000 children and 96,000 community members.

Childhood Denied? (continued from page 1)

These facts are not a secret and yet little has been done to address the problem. There are challenges to be sure. By far the greatest challenge is financial. With more pressing financial priorities, a lack of public investment has limited access to preschool education for Palestinian children. There are only two government-funded preschools in the West Bank, which serve a mere 120 children. Most of the private preschools that do exist are considered inadequate for the care and education of children.

Limited funding also affects the morale and attitudes of preschool teachers, who often earn a fraction of their primary school counterparts. The majority of preschool teachers are unqualified and poorly paid. Families often lack basic child care and development knowledge and skills.

In a unique partnership formed in 2009, the Ministry of Education approved a multi-year initiative under ANERA's leadership to map out a strategy for Early Childhood Development (ECD) for Palestinian society. It brings together teachers, parents and the community to promote quality education for the children of the West Bank and Gaza.

Two years later, the ambitious program has more than achieved some of its preliminary objectives. It has provided high quality training and mentorship for preschool teachers offering children creative and active learning opportunities to enhance their overall

development instead of the traditional rote method that stunts a child's natural abilities.

ANERA ECD Program Coordinator Sulaima Abu-El-Haj, together with leading Palestinian childhood trainers, has developed and facilitated many hours of training and mentoring preschool teachers on the fundamentals of early childhood care and education including child development, child rights, learning theories, safety, classroom organization, expressive arts, play and much more.

To expand the horizon for child development, last summer ANERA developed and facilitated a series of Arts for Childhood workshops and summer camps. The purpose was to get children and their parents involved in a creative art and music program that both develops the child's cognitive and creative skills but also provided a safe, stress-free haven for children during the summer months when school is not in session. On the horizon: a national reading program, Hayya Naqra'! (Let's Read!) aims to develop and distribute high quality children's books that can broaden a child's horizon and fuel their imagination.

But all this takes more than dreams and plans. It requires a commitment and investment by educators, parents and the community who together recognize that quality education is the key to a productive and vibrant society. And, with more funding, so much more can be done!



EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Creating Child-Centered Classrooms



As teachers learn to be more attentive to their students' needs, they create a learning experience that is more child-centered and interactive.

Promote



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Training Teachers



ANERA's continuing teacher training courses throughout 2010 and 2011 covered child development, child rights, learning theories, safety, classroom organization, expressive arts, play and much more.

Having Fun in the



Hundreds of preschoolers
joined in the fun at ANERA's
summer camps in 2011, with
drama, painting and making

Renovating Schools



Four designated pilot schools in the Nablus and Bethlehem areas were renovated to make them more child-friendly and child-safe.

Promoting Artistic Expression



Arts education encourages healthy brain development and active learning, ANERA promotes activities of music, dance, drama, photography, fine art, and handicrafts in preschools.

Summer




In the West Bank, children enjoy expressive arts where they enjoyed playing music.

Providing Materials



ANERA has provided preschools with story books, art materials, thought-provoking toys and learning games, and other classroom equipment.



The 2010-11 academic year saw ANERA's Early Childhood Development (ECD) Program in the West Bank kick into full swing. The program is built on the fundamental pedagogical principles that schools should be safe, the educational process should be child-centered, and parents and the surrounding community should be involved.

We are happy to report that the program has been enthusiastically embraced by teachers, parents and children. The images on these pages showcase different facets of our ECD work.



Annual Dinner Raises Over \$410,000 ■■■■

More than 430 ANERA friends and supporters gathered September 30, 2011 for the Annual Dinner and Fundraiser for our signature health program that benefits the neediest in Palestinian and marginalized communities of the Middle East.

Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of the ANERA donor community, the Annual Dinner raised over \$410,000 that will help carry on the vital deliveries of essential medicines, wheelchairs, hygiene kits, school supplies, medical equipment that are provided to those who need it most.

The theme of the dinner, “ANERA Delivers,” helped showcase the many varied achievements of ANERA’s In-Kind and Medical Relief Program and the people who make it a success – from the generous donor partners to ANERA staffers who make sure the items are delivered.

Through a series of poignant videos to an on-stage interview with ANERA’s in-kind managers—Mostafa Al-Ghosain from Gaza, Hani Khleif from West Bank and Dima Zayat from Lebanon—we showed the benefits we deliver, no matter how big or how small the clinic or community, no matter how old or how young the beneficiaries.

A special tribute was paid to Dr. Vicken Kalbian to honor his generous and effective leadership of ANERA’s Medical Committee for the past 30 years. The committee has been the driving force behind the development and expansion of the in-kind program, which started with just one shipment a year in the 1970s and now coordinates nearly 50 shipments every year.

During the evening, our generous partner organizations were honored for their continuing donations the much-needed medicines, medical and other supplies that ANERA delivers to the neediest in Lebanon, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza.

Finally, the talented comedian Aron Kader kept the audience laughing and smiling.

PHOTOS (from top to bottom): Dr. Vicken Kalbian (left) honored for 30 years as chair of the Medical Committee by long-time friend and new chair, Dr. Alfred Khoury; on-stage interview with ANERA’s in-kind managers in the Middle East; in-kind donors, such as Adam Zayat (right) of AmeriCares, were presented with plaques of appreciation; Aron Kader got a lot of laughs.



Give with confidence...



ANERA has received our ninth consecutive 4-star rating. Only 1% of 5,500 non-profits have achieved this “exceptional” designation from Charity Navigator, which rates organizations on both financial management and accountability & transparency.

...the end of the year is around the corner.



A Gaza family enjoys their greenhouse, built with your support.

Make an end-of-year gift to ANERA and improve lives in the Middle East.

Are you 70^{1/2} or older?

Do you need to satisfy an IRA Required Minimum Distribution for 2011?

Yes to both? Call your IRA administrator today to make an IRA Charitable Rollover contribution to ANERA.

Questions? Call Nancy Nye at 202-266-9720 (nnye@anera.org) or Mary Kate Chaath at 202-266-9711 (mkchaath@anera.org).

December 31, 2011 is the deadline!

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Childhood Denied? ■■■■



from the desk of
Bill Corcoran, President ■■■■

Dear Friend of ANERA:

Children have a special power. Who among us looks at a child and first sees a nationality or race or a political message? Children's special power is their transcendence from all of that.

Children bring innocence, curiosity, and creativity to the world. If we look into the eyes of a child, we see our best hope for a brighter future. If we nurture and protect the hopeful and innocent qualities of children, we nurture and protect those qualities within ourselves.

This issue of the newsletter celebrates the special powers of children through a focus on ANERA's early childhood development work, which is fostering child-centered, expressive learning environments for preschoolers in the West Bank and Gaza.

Your support of early childhood development brightens the future for us all and makes us better than we thought we could be. Thank you,

Bill Corcoran