



ANERA News

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Nahr El Bared Today

by Martine Btaich, ANERA Development Projects Manager, Lebanon

I imagine that you live in a community. You know all of your neighbors. You look out for each other, you go to the same places to shop, study and do business. You marry each other. Then imagine someone takes the biggest wrecking ball you have ever seen and runs it back and forth through the middle of your community. That's what the Nahr El Bared refugee camp in northern Lebanon feels like to me.

In 2007, most of the homes, businesses and schools in Nahr El Bared were razed in armed clashes between outside extremists and the Lebanese army. The camp was vacated, its people scattered to nearby Beddawi camp or further away. The community was shattered.

After five years, very little has been rebuilt and barely 500 families have returned to the old camp where there used to be more than 27,000 people. The mood is bleak. People tell me all the time that they are "fed up" with waiting to resume their normal lives.

(continued on page 3) ■ ■ ■ ■

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: Saja (middle) is a 13-year-old living in Nahr El Bared. After school, she goes to the ANERA-supported Ghassan Kanafani Center to get help with her studies. Zein El Cheikh | ANERA

by the Numbers Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

Percentage of refugees who are jobless: **56%**

Money on which two-thirds of refugees subsist: **\$6/day**

Number of patients a doctor might see in a single day: **117**

Portion of refugees who suffer from chronic illnesses such as hypertension, cancer and diabetes: **2/3rds**

Percentage of camp residents who attain a university level education: **0.1%**

Portion of Nahr El Bared's 27,000 residents who fled their homes in 2007: **2/3rds**

Nahr El Bared's unemployment rate before 2007: **12%**

Nahr El Bared's current unemployment rate: **40%**

Bringing Green to Grey Places

Walking through the narrow winding alleyways of Ein El Helweh refugee camp, the first impression is of a concrete jungle. Electric wires criss-cross overhead and down the gray concrete walls, often leaving hardly any room for sunlight to penetrate into the camp, which is the largest in Lebanon and home to over 70,000 refugees.

But, nowadays the bleak concrete landscape is interrupted by small niches of green dangling from rooftops, window sills and balconies. It's an urban oasis of vegetables and herbs, from lavender, basil, and thyme to peppers, eggplants and tomatoes, thanks to an agriculture project by ANERA and the American University of Beirut (AUB) in partnership with Ein El Helweh Women's Program Center (WPC).

The project trains residents in planting techniques and care for plants, using rooftop rainwater collection systems, growing vertical plantings to cover cement facades, and much more. It also has transformed the WPC into a greenhouse as a prototype of the "green vision."

Funding for this amazing project came from individual donors like you.

 Thank you!



ANERA actively supports vocational training in the building trades, graphic design, hairdressing, nursing, and other marketable job skills.



ANERA rehabilitated a football field that is the only one available without charge for the camp's 18 sports clubs with their 1,500 members.



More than 100 home gardens have been planted with thousands of fruit trees and plants – both a source of food and pride for families.



ANERA provides learning support and remedial education for hundreds of young students who need a little help to do better in subjects like math.

All of the pictured project work in Nahr El Bared is funded by Reach Out to Asia.

Nahr El Bared (continued from page 1)

Despite the poverty and marginalization, Nahr El Bared and its adjacent area used to be the most prosperous and thriving of the 12 Palestinian camps in Lebanon. It is located on the coast in the Tripoli area in the northern part of the country. There was a steady flow of commerce in and out of the camp. Goods were inexpensive and of good quality, so both Palestinians and Lebanese came to do business.

Everything changed in the wake of the clashes. Security became very tight around the camp. Everyone coming in and out needed a permit, even residents. It was like a big prison.

After five years, ANERA is one of the very few international organizations that is still there helping the people of Nahr El Bared.

I make regular visits to the camp as an ANERA program manager. We can point to many things that we have accomplished with your help: a rebuilt community center, a rehabilitated vocational training center, a popular playground, stronger local organizations, water hook-ups to homes, medicines available at the clinic, more greenery. Most recently ANERA rehabilitated a soccer field, supported sports tournaments and the education of hundreds of young people in practical, in-demand skills.

Requirements for permits were loosened this past summer. Some roads have been repaved and opened up as well, but commercial movement is still limited.

With each new family who returns, there is more hope restored. Some shops are slowly starting to reopen. Schools have been rebuilt and people have been able to move out of the temporary container housing that they have lived in for years. There is a newly built medical facility. Still, there is so much more to be done.

The needs can sometimes feel overwhelming, but I am impressed again and again by the amazing resilience and dignity of the people I am privileged to work with in the camp.

One gentleman, Bassam, told me about how he was made a refugee from Palestine, moved to the Shatila camp, was displaced from there in the massacres of 1982, moved to Nahr El Bared, displaced again, and is now in Beddawi camp. He wants to rebuild and return to Nahr El Bared so he can again be part of the community that once gave him strength and some semblance of a home.

The sparkle in this eyes and in the eyes of so many like him always makes me want to do more. ■ ■ ■ ■

ANERA IN LEBANON'S CAMPS

With a staff of six professionals, through strong partnerships with local non-profits, ANERA is one of only a few international organizations working in Lebanon's 12 camps. We provide a range of programs that address the health and welfare of refugee families and support community services. Pictured are just a few.



Nahr El Bared

ANERA trains young people in skills that can help them get work in a very tight job market. Mohammad is now a plumber and can support his family, thanks to courses supported by ANERA at the National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training. ANERA also contributed to rebuilding the center, which had been totally destroyed.



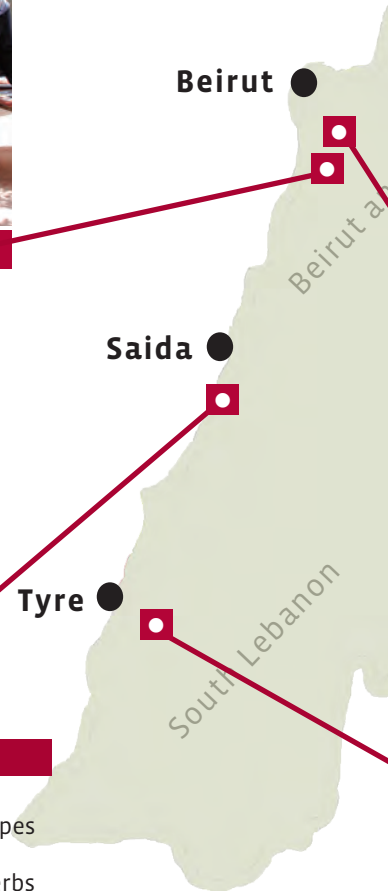
Burj Al Barajneh

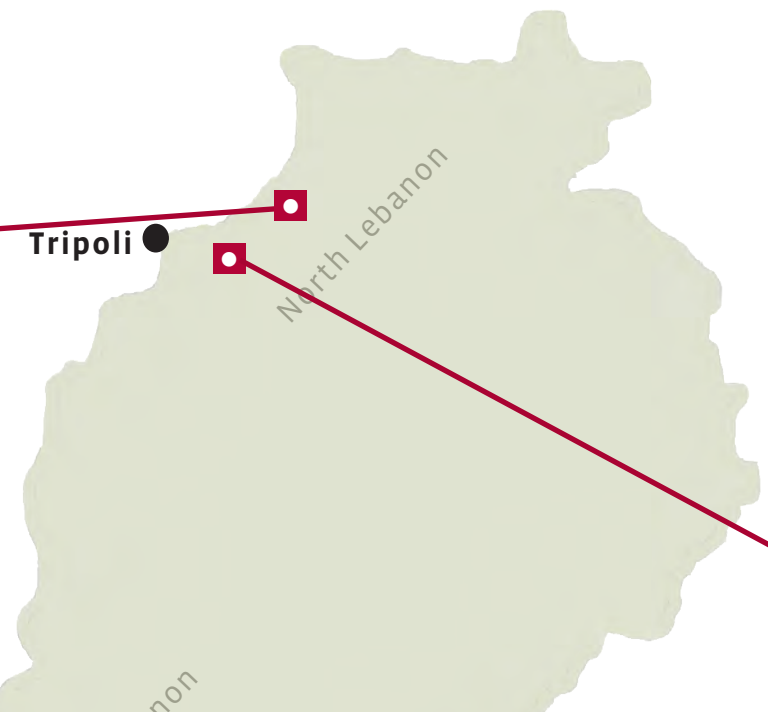
ANERA partners with hundreds of amazing local non-profits to do everything we do. The Palestinian Women's Humanitarian Organization is a non-profit that works to improve the lives of women and children through public health and educational initiatives. The PWHO branch in Burj Al Barajneh is working with ANERA on our women-to-women public health campaign to encourage rational use of medicine.



Ein El Helweh

ANERA is bringing green to the bleak concrete landscapes of the camps. Families are planting vegetables and herbs on rooftops, window sills and balconies. Ilham is part of the first group of 26 women in Ein El Helweh to participate in ANERA's urban gardening program. She has discovered her green thumb and her roof is full of plants now.





Beddawi

ANERA provides scholarships for tuition, room and board so that young Palestinians from the camps can attend the Al Kafaat Foundation, a premier training institution in Lebanon. Sajida, from Beddawi camp, is in her second year of a jewelry-making course at Al Kafaat.



Shatila

ANERA delivers donated health care supplies and medicine to providers like the Volunteer Outreach Center in Shatila. Staffed entirely by young medical professionals who volunteer their services, they help a whole population designated as "foreigners" who are ineligible for public health care. This leaves patients dependant on non-profit organizations like VOC and ANERA to get their medicines.

Burj Shemali

Messages about the proper use of antibiotics and home therapies reach thousands of camp residents across Lebanon. Our Healthy Spring Days at four camps used interactive methods, like a theater production and discussion with ANERA's pharmacist, to engage and interest people. This youngster at the Burj Shemali event is proud of his sign that says: "Our liver loves us."



Annual Dinner 2012: Faces of the Future



Almost 400 ANERA friends and supporters gathered in Washington, DC on October 5 for our Annual Dinner and Fundraiser, Faces of the Future. Photographs of Palestinian children filled the ballroom and their dreams of the future were shared in their own voices through video.

Award-winning Palestinian-American comedian Dean Obeidallah masterfully guided the evening with wit and grace.

Three real stories of young lives changed by ANERA project work were presented in monologues. A child in Gaza now has vegetables to eat with her bread because her family has a home garden. A 19 year-old youth who was born in a refugee camp in Lebanon and dropped out of school at age 10 can now provide for his entire family because he learned plumbing in a vocational training center. And, a Palestinian mother has the knowledge and medication to eliminate intestinal parasites that were ravaging her children's health.

The ANERA community honored Basem and Muna Hishmeh, who support projects such as the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music and Al Bayyara playgrounds; TOMS Shoes, a California-based company that sends thousands of new shoes to preschool children in Gaza; and, Najjad Zeenni, who contributed an IT Center of Excellence at Birzeit University and a school of engineering at Al Quds University.

Funds raised at the event — roughly \$300,000 — will renovate preschools, support arts and music education, establish more home gardens, and deliver vital medicines.



Basem and Muna Hishmeh were honored for their commitment to children in the Middle East.



Samar El Yassir, ANERA's country director from Lebanon, stands as MC Dean Obeidallah (on the screen left) announces her name from stage.



9-year-old Katja tells the story of a young girl from Gaza who has a veggie-filled garden from ANERA.

Make your end-of-year donation to ANERA.

0.9% Fundraising

5.7% Management & General

93.4% of funds are spent on projects in the Middle East

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Nahr El Bared Today



from the desk of Bill Corcoran, President

Dear Friend of ANERA:

When ANERA donors came to the Annual Dinner at the beginning of October, one of the stories told was of a young man from Nahr El Bared refugee camp in northern Lebanon who described himself as one of the "forgotten people."

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live in overcrowded camps and deal with a long list of challenges every day: discrimination, joblessness, and exclusion from the society around them.

Those who come from Nahr El Bared have even more to worry about. Most of their homes were destroyed in 2007 in armed clashes and they were forced to move away while the camp was being rebuilt. Over five years later, it is still a long way from inhabitable.

This issue of the newsletter gives you an update on the situation in Nahr El Bared and also showcases some of ANERA's accomplishments in several other Palestinian camps in Lebanon.

Thank you to ANERA's donors for sending a message to the refugees of Lebanon that they are not forgotten.

Bill Corcoran