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by Rania Elhilou, Gaza Communications Officer



This summer was a truly scary time for us in Gaza. The third war in five years and the most destructive. My daughter Joudy was born just one week after the 2009 war ended. My little Juana is not yet a year old. This is their reality.

They wanted to go out and play like any normal child but that was impossible. They couldn't understand what the loud booming was and why we were all so nervous.

At one point it was not safe for my mother and father, sister and brother in their homes so they came to stay with us.

One night we had a serious discussion about whether to sleep in separate rooms so not all of us would perish if a bomb fell on our apartment building. We decided in the end to sleep shoulder-to-shoulder and face together whatever might come.

After 51 days of bombing, I finally could go out and move around a bit. I was totally shocked at the extent of the devastation and sad to see so many families with nothing, uprooted from their homes and their lives.

When the staff finally gathered in the ANERA office, we believed it was a miracle that all 16 of us had survived. There were lots of hugs and handshakes and even a little laughter as we tried to regain some normality.

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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: Displaced children at Salah Aldin Boys School in Gaza City received water and hygiene items from ANERA, bought in the West Bank with USAID funds. Mohammad Zanoon, photographer

Shoulder-to-Shoulder

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But we didn't waste any time. We got down to work -- making calls and organizing the distribution of food and water, hygiene kits and medicines.

It felt good, really, because this is what keeps us going. It's why we exist. We are so proud of the work ANERA does because we can and do make a difference.

Even while the bombs were falling on us, Mostafa and our in-kind staff managed to keep supplies of medicines flowing to hospitals that needed them desperately. Mohammad and Sami risked their lives to distribute food to families living in shelters. Ahmad set up water tanks in Khan Younis, where residents crowded around him, desperate for precious water.

As soon as there were any ceasefires, people from our office got out to distribute food and water and other supplies to the displaced in their temporary shelters.

It gave us a purpose – to be there when our communities needed us. It felt good to be out helping others. We were grateful for the chance to be of service.

Let me end with a message from ANERA staff in Gaza: We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the support you provided and do provide to us every day.

When we feel abandoned by the world, it means everything to us to know that you care and that we are not alone.

Thank you.



Children in Khan Younis fill up a water jug at one of the **87 water tanks** ANERA set up and refills daily throughout Gaza.



ANERA delivered **four containers of vital donated medicines, surgical supplies and antibiotics** (valued at \$3.7 million).



ANERA locally purchased and delivered **5,079 food parcels** to families throughout Gaza.



ANERA distributed **hygiene kits to 36,577** displaced families.

ANERA's Response to Gaza's Water Crisis

By the Numbers

80% of water networks were **destroyed during the war.**

All 1.6 million residents in Gaza are affected by **dire water shortages.**

Rafah area - 6



Khan Younis area - 43




Middle area - 39

Gaza City area - 56



Beit Hanoon & Beit Lahia areas - 28

 = ANERA post-war water project

TYPES OF PROJECTS



Providing fuel to run **9 desalination plants** reaching 500,000+ people with clean drinking water.



Providing fuel to pump water from **62 community wells.**



Regularly refilling 87 tanks with water for communal use. **12.9 million liters** delivered so far.



Delivered 214,866 bottles of water to 62 UN shelters for displaced families.

It's amazing the impact one person can have on so many people. Nabila Ali, a mother in the suburbs of Chicago, decided to bring attention to the Gaza war in her community. As someone who cares passionately about helping people, Nabila could not stand idly by as she watched the tragedies of the war in Gaza. She reviewed a number of organizations working to bring relief to Palestinians and chose ANERA because of the transparency, the immediate response, and the mission of advancing the well-being of Palestinians.

Nabila launched a Facebook campaign to inform people about what was happening and to offer them a way to contribute in a positive way. She then stepped back and let the message and her regular updates do the work. The message was simple: "There is no amount too small to give." And people did just that because they realized that whatever they could contribute would be welcome.

In the first few days, it was slow. But gradually more people joined the page and then people from outside of her Chicago network joined the cause and gave generously. Each new person brought in his/her network and the message about how to help snowballed.

On top of her social media efforts, Nabila recruited volunteers to go to local mosques and ask community leaders to talk about how ANERA was responding to the crisis. She provided them all with stacks of brochures about ANERA's work in the region.

At first Nabila knew the people who donated, but as her efforts grew and more people gave, the campaign took on a life of its own, forming a mosaic of donors of all ages and backgrounds. She knew people cared and she gave them a constructive way to engage with the events in Gaza.



Nabila and her daughters

When One Person Decides to Take Action

Our Community

Saluting ANERA's



Abeer Aqeel, Engineer, Palestinian Community Infrastructure Development Program (PCID)



Ahmad Al-Najjar, In-Kind Program Coordinator



Ashraf El-Shobaki, Infrastructure Development Program (PCID)



Mohammad Zanoon, Photographer



Islam Muhanna, Agronomist



Marwa Sbaha, Early Childhood Development



Mostafa Al Ghosain, In-Kind Manager



Mousa Shawwa, Support Services



Nahed Al-Wehaidi, Early Childhood Development



Rania Elhilou, Communications Officer



Sabah Al-Barakoni, Gaza Office Manager



Sami Matar, Early Childhood Development

Gaza Staff



Structure Coordinator, PCID



Dema El-Tabba', Administrative Assistant



Faisal Abu Shahla, Gaza Area Manager, PCID



Intern,
Development Program



Mohammed Al Ghussein (middle), Project Officer,
Early Childhood Development Program



Mohammed Abu Jahal, Warehouse Assistant



ANERA Gaza Director

ANERA's Gaza office is made up of seasoned education, health and development professionals. For 51 days in July and August, they – like everyone else in Gaza – feared for their lives as bombs rained down on their tiny strip of land. No one felt safe. And yet, despite the bombs and the fear, ANERA's staff set aside their usual duties and responded to the crisis in whatever way they could be most useful. They took on a variety of emergency relief roles because they wanted to help the neediest in the devastated communities around them.

Now that things are quiet again, the full scope of what needs to be done becomes clearer every day. ANERA's staff is continues to distribut relief items like water, food, hygiene kits and more. But they have also resumed their professional roles, doing damage assessments, making repairs with what's available inside Gaza and planning for the future.



Project Engineer,
Development Program

To learn more about each member of our staff,
visit anera.org/gazastaff

The 2014 Annual Dinner was a Success

ANERA's Annual Dinner this year was held at the Omni Shoreham hotel on October 17. Among the 410 guests, we welcomed staff from our offices in Lebanon and West Bank, including Samar Naser, our longest serving employee with more than 28 years of service in our Jerusalem office. And Rania Elhilou from our Gaza office got through Israeli restrictions and was able to join us.

It was an especially poignant evening, given the recent war and devastation in Gaza. President Bill Corcoran briefed everyone on the emergency relief efforts ANERA has undertaken in Gaza. He also outlined how the funds raised at last year's gathering helped enhance our long-term sustainable development programs.

"Investing in Women, Strengthening Communities" was the theme of this year's event. To highlight the role of women in Palestinian society, the opening video of the evening featured several women directly connected to ANERA as employees, as community partners and as beneficiaries.

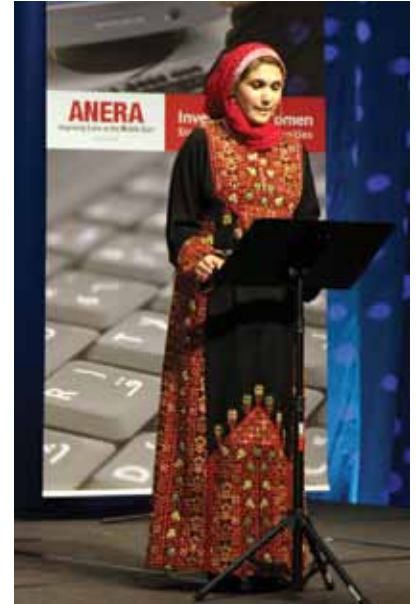
Two actors presented narratives that highlighted successful women who have benefitted from ANERA's support – a young nursing student in Lebanon and a preschool director in the West Bank whose dilapidated school is being replaced with a brand new facility. Master of Ceremonies Fiona Tarazi and her family were acknowledged for their generous funding of this school.

The third narrative was presented by ANERA's Gaza staffer Rania Elhilou who related some of the terrifying experiences that Gaza families endured during the summer bombings. Rania also detailed the courageous and energetic response of our Gaza team to the crisis even before the war ended.

ANERA honored Reach Out To Asia for its partnership in vocational programs and youth sports activities in Lebanon; the Ajram Family Foundation for its generous support of our relief work in Gaza and our work in Lebanon with refugees from Syria; and Hope Cobb and a group of ANERA donors who organized the funding that launched the Gaza Women's Loan Fund 20 years ago. The fund still flourishes today.

The \$400,000+ raised at the event will be used to support ANERA programs benefitting and empowering women and their families in Palestine and Lebanon.

PHOTOS (from the top): Rania Elhilou tells her story; Gaby, Stacey and Genny Ajram (from the left) accept their gift from ANERA Board Chair Joe Saba and President Bill Corcoran; well over 400 people packed the ballroom.



What sets ANERA apart?

- ✓ 45+ years of life-changing programs.
- ✓ 95 staff members in Palestine and Lebanon.
- ✓ 7 offices across Palestine and Lebanon.
- ✓ Reporting back on what you make possible.

Donate with confidence:
anera.org/donate



Are you 70 years old or older?

Would you like to make a donation to ANERA?

Making a donation from your IRA is an easy way for you to give a gift that helps fulfill ANERA's mission.

IMPORTANT NOTE: As of October 15, Congress had not yet reauthorized the IRA Charitable Rollover which in the past allowed donors to make IRA contributions of up to \$100,000 and not include any part of such contribution in income for tax purposes. In case that provision is not reauthorized, such contribution will still be tax deductible to the taxpayer like any other charitable contribution. **We strongly suggest you check with your IRA administrator or tax adviser to learn the tax implications of any action you may choose to take.**

Questions? Call Nancy Nye at 202-266-9720 or e-mail her at nnye@anera.org



In Memory: Said Khoury

June 6, 1923 - October 15, 2014

Said Khoury was one of the founders of the Consolidated Contractors Company (CCC). He was also a major philanthropist to the Palestinian people and, as such, funded the Said Khoury IT Center of Excellence at Al Quds University – the first of four centers ANERA established in the West Bank.

ANERA

Improving Lives in the Middle East

Since 1968

American Near East Refugee Aid
1111 14th Street NW, #400
Washington, DC 20005

Shoulder-to-Shoulder

ANERA NEWS

Fall 2014 | Issue 186

Dear Friend of ANERA:

It was a terrible summer for our colleagues and friends in Gaza. For 51 days they lived in fear for their lives. They and their families all survived and are back at work. Now they are responding to all of the needs they see around them. And, because of you, our amazing ANERA community of donors, they are able to do so much.

You will learn more about our Gaza staff as well as the scope of their response in the pages of this newsletter.

We also include a report on our Annual Dinner this year, which focused on women – ANERA's staff, partners and beneficiaries – and the impact they have on their communities. It was an evening of companionship and solidarity shared with staff representing overseas offices. We also raised well over \$400,000 for programs!

We have done so much, but there is still so much to do. Thanks to your generosity, we can meet the challenges.

Bill Cousen
ANERA President

