

ANERA *Newsletter*

American Near East Refugee Aid

Number 97 Spring 1992

EVERY LAST DROP

ANERA-SUPPORTED WATER PROJECTS IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP

In the spring of 1991, Jordan's King Hussein predicted that the next war in the Middle East would be about water rights. A few months later Iraq invaded Kuwait, ruining this projection. However, the truth of that statement was acknowledged by all. Water is a scarce and valuable resource in the Middle East. The major sources of fresh water—rivers and aquifers (underground levels of earth or rock which retain ground-

water)—are severely overused. The problem is getting worse as increasing numbers of people and higher temperatures create more demand. "Regional politics also contributes to the growing water problem, as the nations that share the region's main river systems have been unable to rise above historic rivalries to cooperate in the development and allocation of precious water supplies" (*Christian Science Monitor*, March 12, 1990).

With a lasting peace, nations in the

Middle East could work together to use water resources more efficiently and secure their water supplies for the future. For example, both Lebanon and Turkey have excess water. If this surplus could be transferred to areas where there is a water shortage, all nations and people would benefit. Cooperating nations could also share their technologies for wastewater treatment, recycling and cost-effective methods of desalinization.

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HELP THEM FINISH SCHOOL

"With each scholarship you give, you make one more child a happy child in this torn and sad region of ours," writes Mrs. Samia Khoury, director of Rawdat El-Zuhur elementary school.

We still need \$16,500 to reach our budget this school year. Based on last year's gifts from people like you, we have committed a total of \$108,200 to the four ANERA-supported schools in East Jerusalem, Gaza and Beirut. We still need your help.

You can help a child like Haidar Ahmad. Your scholarship donation of \$100 gives him, and thousands of other children like him, the tools and knowledge they need to become productive adults and contributing members of society.



Please use the coupon on the back of this newsletter to help us reach our goal. If your gift arrives before May 31st, you will help children this school year. If your donation arrives later, you will help us begin working towards next year's goal. ■

BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY REOPENS

The Israeli Civil Administration in the West Bank finally allowed Birzeit University to reopen in late April 1992. With this event, all post-secondary schools have now been permitted to return to their normal functions.

Education is an essential right of all people. The universities, community colleges, and polytechnics of the West Bank and Gaza should never have been held hostage to the politics of the day. While we welcome the opening of all the educational institutions and wish the students well in their studies, we cannot but express our sadness at the loss of over four years of normal classes, laboratories and other educational activities. ■

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Sea of Galilee Threatens to Overflow its Banks

Headlines like this appeared not once but three times in the winter of 1992, as record amounts of snow and rain fell in Israel, the occupied territories and Syria. Almost four feet of precipitation caused serious flooding in fields and rural areas, washing away winter crops and creating great hardship. This is abnormal. For despite the recent rainfall, years of drought and overuse continue to jeopardize the security of water resources for nations in the

Middle East.

Water resources from the territories are vital to Israel's economy. The major aquifer in the West Bank provides somewhere between 25% and 40% of Israel's water supply¹. This aquifer, which is currently controlled by Israel, is being overdrawn, causing the West Bank's shallow wells—those used primarily by Palestinians—to go dry. The problem in the Gaza Strip is even worse. There the aquifer has been overdrawn to the point that salt water is leaking into it. As a result, the water becomes brackish and unusable for either domestic or agricultural use.

¹ Water Wars. Joyce Starr, *Foreign Policy*, Spring 91, v. 82.

Some experts predict that this phenomenon will ruin the majority of farms within this decade.

Agriculture, along with related industries such as food processing, is one of the few sectors left to Palestinians in the occupied territories. The lack of water is a major constraint to their economic development. "For Palestinians under occupation, time has ceased since 1967," says ANERA's economist Ibrahim Matar. "Palestinians have been prevented from expanding their own water supplies since the occupation began."

To increase the water available to Palestinians for agricultural and industrial purposes, ANERA has sponsored a number of water-related projects.

Wastewater Treatment and Reuse

Israel treats and reuses over 50% of its wastewater within its pre-1967 borders. Using similar technology, ANERA is undertaking projects in El-Bireh/Ramallah, Salfit, and Bethlehem/Beit Sahour. While wastewater treatment can produce water clean enough to drink, this method is very expensive. A more cost-effective use of treated wastewater is for crops like fruit and nut trees, fodder and fibers. The El-Bireh/Ramallah project, for example, takes wastewater from the larger town of El-Bireh, gives it mid-level treatment and then sells it to the farmers of Deir Dubwan village, who will use it to irrigate their fields.

In addition to providing water for agriculture, this project addresses other problems faced by towns and villages in the West Bank and Gaza. Because of bureaucratic and political constraints, villages are increasingly dependent on ill-designed cesspools to dispose of their wastewater. As villages expand, these cesspools become overloaded and back up, leaking raw sewage into the earth or onto streets. Even worse, as the cesspools drain they pollute ground water sources, creating long-term health risks. The El-Bireh/Ramallah project, by treating and reusing the water, creates an environmentally and economically sound method of waste disposal.



The disorganized and ill-planned use of water in Gaza contributes to serious public health problems. ANERA's Gaza Rainwater Project helps clean up the streets of Gaza City (above) where dirty water stagnates for months after heavy rains. Safe, clean water for drinking, cooking and washing (left) is not always available.



ZBEIDAT IS STILL IN BUSINESS

ANERA donors do make a difference in the lives of ordinary Palestinians and Lebanese struggling to support themselves. Take the example of Issa Fat'hi, a farmer from Zbeidat. He owns a little over two acres of land in the arid Jordan valley where he grows squash, tomatoes, fava beans, eggplant and corn.

Prior to the 1967 war, the farmers of Zbeidat irrigated their fields from a local natural spring. While the flow would increase and decrease with the seasons and rainfall, in most years it would produce sufficient water for the farmers.

After 1967 an Israeli settlement established near Zbeidat drilled a deep water well that caused the Zbeidat spring to go dry. It became very difficult to earn a living by farming. Mr. Issa's only other employment option, if he chose to stay in the valley, was as a field worker or day laborer for the larger, mechanized Israeli farms.

Recognizing the cause and effect, the Israeli water authority awarded water to Zbeidat from the new well in a quantity equivalent to what it had lost. However, the settlement only pumped the well twice a week, enough to fill up large tanks above their fields. While the Zbeidat farmers indeed took irrigation water during this limited time, they could not fully or effectively use their allotment.

Here ANERA donors have made a true difference. With their support ANERA helped the Zbeidat farmers build their own water storage tank on a small hill above the village. Now, whenever the deep well is pumping, the village can take its full share of water, store it, and use it appropriately over the following days.

This also means that farmers can now use drip irrigation systems without needing additional pumps. This is an



important added benefit that ANERA donors have provided. Drip irrigation is the most water-efficient technology. The height of the storage tank allows natural water pressure to build up. This pressure, along with the force of gravity, turns the drip irrigation systems without pumps. The farmers save considerable money on the cost of pump equipment and fuel.

Issa Fat'hi can now stop flooding his fields to irrigate them, an inefficient use of precious water. Instead, he can use the new drip system. With this, and with sufficient water from the storage tank, Mr. Issa will cultivate three acres of vegetables this year instead of two. He will in turn earn more income for his family.

ANERA
Deputy Director
Ibrahim Matar and
Vice President
Paula Stinson
view the pump,
water transport
pipe and irrigation
systems during a
visit to Zbeidat.



Gaza Rainwater Project

ANERA's Gaza Rainwater Conservation Project is a second example of making more water available. This project channels rainwater from different places in Gaza City, where it used to collect in unpaved, gutterless streets, into a retaining pool. The water is used either for irrigation or to replenish the ground water.

This project also solves several problems. First, it removes storm water from the city streets; the value of this cannot be underestimated. For three months out of the year rainwater collects in large, stagnant pools. The standing water damages property, obstructs traffic and overloads the sewage system. Most urgently, it serves as a breeding medium for contamination and disease, which pose a serious health risk to the 750,000 residents of Gaza. Second, water from the retaining pool will replenish the underground aquifers which are currently being

tapped beyond their capacity.

There are many benefits to the people of Gaza. First, it saves the city and its residents a large sum of money on street and building repairs. Second, farmers will gain income from increased crop yields and citizens will enjoy additional potable water.

ANERA's Projects Go a Long Way

While only political solutions can address the overall deficit of water in Israel and the occupied territories, ANERA's projects go a long way in reducing the hardships to Palestinian farmers from the lack of sufficient water. ANERA donors make a real difference by supporting these vital projects. Proper drainage, conservation and recycling help clean up the streets, reduce disease and improve the quality of life for Palestinian communities.

ANERA HAS RECEIVED GIFTS...

In Honor of:

Paul H. Adriance ■ Yoram Binur, author of *My Enemy, Myself* ■ Mr. and Mrs. H.S. Choate ■ Ernest A. Ferris ■ Mr. Greg Howell ■ Jesus Christ ■ Connie Krewski ■ John and Sophia Nogel ■ the grandchildren of Mr. and Mrs. Teofilo ■ J. Siman ■ Uncle Jer's Boutique in Los Angeles ■ Humanity; Justice in the Middle East ■ Palestinian aid ■ Zakat.

In Memory of:

Norman Bindah, loving husband of Thelma and beloved father and brother ■ John Davis ■ Marion Leeson Field ■ Khadija Gharbaovi ■ Albert Glock; ■ Stella Hanania ■ husband and parents of Mrs. M. Cross ■ Thomas Kouzes, dear husband of Thelma Kouzes ■ Salih Mehdy ■ father of Dr. Mona Mehdy ■ Paulette Millette ■ Mrs. Sheila O'Donnell ■ Dorothy Whalen ■ Jonathan Yeager.

Condolences to our friends and supporters at Mobil Oil Corporation on the death of Dave Roberts, Middle East public affairs specialist and friend.

Thank you to the many people who contributed gifts in memory of:

Francis Olcott Allen IV, Egyptologist and Middle East expert, survived by his wife Patricia and their four children.

*Rev. Dr. Harry Gaylord Dorman, Jr.
Shafeec A. Mansour*

ENCLOSED IS A GIFT FOR ANERA'S PROJECTS IN THE WEST BANK, GAZA STRIP AND LEBANON.

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I would like to provide a 1-year scholarship for a child in Gaza. (\$100 per child)*

I would like to provide a 1-year scholarship for a child in Beirut. (\$100 per child)*

I would like to provide a 1-year scholarship for a child in East Jerusalem. (\$100 per child)*

* Sponsors receive a photo of the child and a letter from the school during the year.

Written by Deedy Magill, former ANERA staff assistant now with Chemonics International, a development and agricultural consulting agency. Assisted by ANERA staff. Photos courtesy of N. Nalbandian, Garo Photo East Jerusalem; Bill Foley, Save the Children; UNRWA

ANERA

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