



ANERA News

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Bethlehem's Challenges

by Mohammad Aburajab

I have worked for eight years in ANERA's Hebron office as an engineer and area manager for the southern West Bank. My work often brings me to Bethlehem, a sacred and special place to many, but one that faces formidable challenges. Families there are struggling. The Separation Wall has cut off the city from the surrounding areas, tourism is down, the economy is failing and those who can afford it move away, making matters worse.

As a sign of just how bad things have become, the city struggled to light its Christmas tree this year due to lack of funds.

Bethlehem also suffers from terrible water shortages – probably the worst in the Palestinian Territories, along with Hebron. In Bethlehem, the average person has access to 30-40 liters per day, far less than the 150 liters per capita per day necessary for a healthy life, as stated by The World Health Organization.

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: Students at St. Joseph's School in Bethlehem where, among other things, ANERA rehabilitated two Roman cisterns that provide drinking water and collect rainwater to be used in the garden

by the Numbers Infrastructure Development

Number of people who now have clean and regular supplies of potable water in their homes because of water connections ANERA has made in the West Bank since 2008: **100,000**

Number of people who rely on the services of three West Bank clinics that ANERA has recently upgraded: **12,500**

Number of short-term jobs created, since 2008, by ANERA's USAID-funded infrastructure projects in areas of the West Bank where unemployment is high: **5,000**

Number of rooftop water tanks ANERA erected on homes in Lebanon's Nahr El Bared refugee camp, ensuring that thousands of people have a safe, regular, and dependable source of water in their homes: **200**

Number of children benefiting from renovations ANERA has made to 42 preschools in Gaza: **4,250**

Number of homes in the Jabalia and Khan Younis areas of Gaza that ANERA has connected to water networks: **883**

Building a New Engineering School

Thanks to a \$3 million donation from Najjad Zeenni, a Palestinian engineer and businessman from Abu Dhabi, ANERA is supervising the construction of a new engineering faculty at Al-Quds University.

Najjad Zeenni was born on a boat heading to Beirut as his family was escaping the war in 1948. At 62, he visited the Palestinian Territories for the first time to break ground for the building.

“Perseverance and endurance when added to intelligence and education creates a successful formula,” said Mr. Zeenni at the groundbreaking ceremony. “In order for us to develop our country, we must invest in education and educational institutes.”

This is not the first time Mr. Zeenni has funded an educational facility. In 2008, ANERA completed construction of the Najjad Zeenni IT Center of Excellence at Birzeit University.



Najjad Zeenni at the December 2010 groundbreaking ceremony



ANERA is proud to have generous donors, like Mr. Zeenni, and capable partners to bring to fruition these vital programs which will benefit Palestinians for years to come.

In Remembrance: Robert Crothers



Robert Crothers speaking at the inauguration of the IT Center of Excellence at Birzeit University.

ANERA announces with great sadness that former Country Director for the West Bank and Gaza Robert Crothers died in London, England on December 3, 2010 at the age of 65.

Robert supervised a staff of 60 and oversaw ANERA's multi-million dollar programs in the Palesitnian Territories from 2008 to 2010. He was particularly proud of his efforts toward starting up ANERA's Early Childhood Education initiative, which is aimed at transforming the preschool environment of the West Bank.

Before coming to ANERA, for 16 years, Robert worked in treasury and economics for the Province of Ontario, Canada. That was followed by 20 years in east and west Africa, central and southeast Asia, and the Pacific islands with various aid agencies. For five years he worked at UNDP, based in Ramallah.

"Robert created new expectations of excellence and hard work that are worthy of imitation," says ANERA's President Bill Corcoran. "He devoted long hours of work to ANERA and the projects of the West Bank and Gaza because he loved the Palestinian people so deeply. We are very grateful to him for his service to Palestinian families."

Mr. Crothers left ANERA in the spring of 2010 to spend more time with his family and to more aggressively treat his cancer. He is survived by his wife Eileen and his son Robert, who both live in London.

Bethlehem's Challenges

Even against all these odds I am inspired repeatedly by the people I have come to know through my work in Bethlehem. They are not suffering because they do not have the capacity to succeed, but because of a political situation that is beyond their control. I ask myself every day how ANERA can help them with the things we CAN control in order to make their lives better.

It is gratifying to be able to point to years of ANERA's accomplishments: the multitude of schools that we have renovated or built; the recent renovations and upgrades to the Beit Jala Hospital, which 170,000 people rely on for medical care; the hundreds of families in the Dar Salah area who are now connected to a network that brings water to their homes.

I have had the privilege to oversee countless more projects in Bethlehem over the years, the majority of which have been funded by grants from the US Agency for International Development, but there is so much more that can be done with private funding from ANERA's community of donors.

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I see many more delapidated schools that need vital upgrades to their facilities or equipment like computers. One of my big hopes is that ANERA can excavate water collection cisterns so more families can collect precious water during the rainy season. There is also unused land around the city that could be converted to home gardens, providing families with food and a supplement to their income.

Recently, I visited a school where the students have been studying in dungeon-like conditions in a basement. ANERA is building an additional eight classrooms so those students can enjoy naturally lit classrooms and fresh air. This is a school where Christian and Muslim children study and play together every day. These children are a model for us all and they deserve every opportunity for a bright future.

I am so glad that ANERA is finding and creating opportunities for the worthy families of Bethlehem.



Brick and Mortar

Building a Foundation for Future Generations

For decades, ANERA has been building, upgrading and refurbishing infrastructure in disadvantaged communities throughout the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon. Our staff of locally hired engineers know the scope of the problems and how to implement technical solutions.

Many of our largest projects have been funded by the US Agency for International Development, which has been an active donor to ANERA since 1972, and the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development. Individual and private donors have also provided significant funding assistance, from \$1 million dollar donations that erect a whole buildings to thousands of smaller donations that pay for preschool renovations and new computers in schools.



Constructed the catering and restaurant training school facilities, complete with a placement office and IT center, at the Al-Kafaat Foundation in Beirut.



Renovated the Tubas Girls' School in the West Bank, which includes new sunroofs that allow the 550 students and their teachers to use the vital space...rain or shine.



Built a Social Activity Center in Beit Liqia, West Bank, which provides social and educational activities for 10,000 villagers, 45% of whom are unemployed. The new center (left) is five times the size of the old one (above).

BEFORE



Rebuilt the Afaquna Youth Center near Nahr El Bared refugee camp in Lebanon. Some 400 students will be trained annually in high-demand skills such as carpentry, aluminum work, nursing, child care, and automotive electronics.



Built the Najjad Zeenni IT Center of Excellence, one of four such centers attached to West Bank universities.



Connected hundreds of families to water networks in Jabalia and Khan Younis using PVC piping available inside Gaza.



Erected a water reservoir in Arrana, a northern West Bank town with 2,500 residents who now enjoy running water.



Upgraded the facilities at the Rafidia Hospital, the largest referral hospital in the northern West Bank.



Renovated the Bani Suheila Preschool in Gaza, one of 42 schools rehabilitated using materials available inside Gaza.



Seeing is Believing ■■■■

The dingy basement room was constructed in 1972 and had very little ventilation or light. Outdated computers were stacked in a monotonous line alongside moldy crumbling walls. This was the room in Kufur Thulth Secondary Girls School, located southeast of Qalqilia, where hundreds of high school girls used to squeeze together to learn about computers.

"The computers were so slow and old that they would shut down in the middle of a lesson," said 15-year-old Iman Jamal, who aspires to become a computer engineer.

Imagine her delight when Iman arrived to class in September and Headmistress Ayda Mwafi showed her the new, brightly-lit computer room and what it contained: four rows of 17 state-of-the-art personal computers, two printers, an LCD projector, networking equipment, and much more.

The gift was the brainchild of ANERA engineers who were finishing a USAID-funded project to upgrade school facilities and add classrooms. As they were completing the renovations, ANERA engineers quickly saw that improving the structure of the building would not be enough. The classrooms needed new computer equipment and furniture too. So ANERA offered to supply the computers and the local municipality responded by adding chairs, desks, whiteboards and drapes.

Thanks to \$20,000 from ANERA's generous donors, ANERA was able to invest in the future of 392 students. ANERA donated all the equipment in recognition of the school's achievements and its students' exceptional performance at national-level secondary examinations.

Headmistress Mwafi is especially grateful for the new computer facility. "We are so reliant on computers in this information age. The personal computer has become the library, notebook and pen of any person, let alone any student," she says. "It is indispensable."



PHOTOS – from the top: (1) the computer room before renovations, (2) the computer room after renovations, (3) Iman Jamal, who aspires to be a computer engineer, (4) two friends outside of the school, with the new floors ANERA added in the background.

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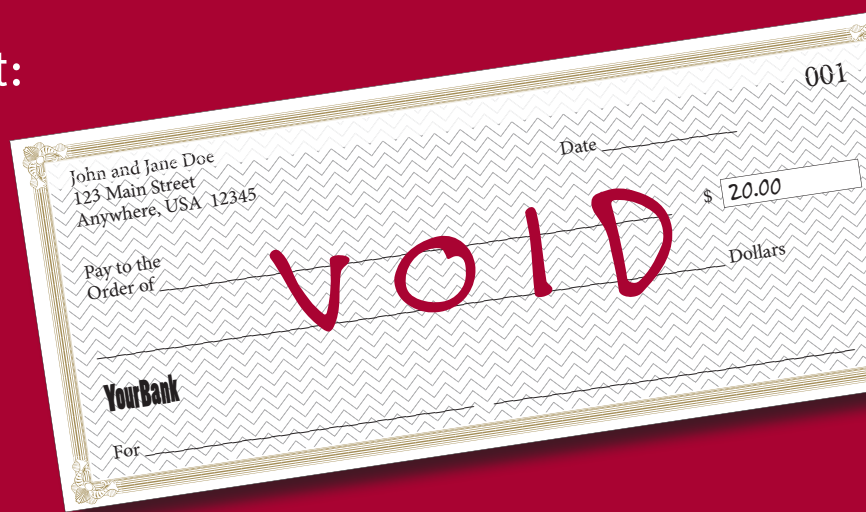
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Bethlehem's Challenges



from the desk of
Bill Corcoran, President



Dear Friend of ANERA:

I just got back from a visit to our projects in the Middle East where, as always, I saw signs of ANERA's infrastructure work everywhere.

A vital combination of ingredients comes together in this work: ANERA provides experienced and professional engineers, detailed designs, brick and mortar. The communities we serve provide a willing labor force and a commitment to building a better life.

So when ANERA's engineers arrive in a village to listen to its residents' needs and to carry out the resulting plans, they hear from parents, teachers, students, community leaders, and workers how much ANERA's work makes a difference – today and for generations to come.

We're building more than buildings or water connections, we're bringing a rare sense of permanence where so much is uncertain.

Bill Corcoran