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In Difficult Times, ANERA's Work Continues

A trip report by ANERA President Bill Corcoran

The past several months of daily acts of violence between Israelis and Palestinians mean that the atmosphere for ANERA's work has changed dramatically. In December, I went on a short trip to Palestine to check in with our staff as they continue to do their jobs during these very tense times.

I stayed in a hotel in East Jerusalem, on the Palestinian side of the city. The nervousness and disquiet were palpable to me as I walked through the streets and tried to make eye contact with passers-by. Tourists were nowhere to be seen. Hotels are temporarily closing their doors. The Old City markets are deserted and the streets of Jerusalem empty as darkness falls.

Israeli soldiers are everywhere. No one knows where the situation is going.

ANERA's staff tries to be safe, but movement is very difficult and unpredictable, as security at checkpoints has intensified. As an example of the kind of thing that can happen, I nearly was stuck in Ramallah when I went there for a meeting. It's a short trip from Jerusalem, but I had to pass through one of the most notorious checkpoints, Qalandia: the "entry point" to the West Bank. I came and went relatively easily, but two hours after I passed through, there was a stabbing and shooting and the checkpoint was closed down for the rest of the day.

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COVER PHOTO: A contractor in Gaza works on a water network in the Al Mashahra area.

Rania Elhilou, photographer

Imagine if you lived in Palestine and were stranded on one side or the other as you tried to make your way back home to your family. These are the kinds of challenges ANERA's staff deal with on a daily basis.

Nonetheless, ANERA is still one of the more active international organizations on the ground. We are fully staffed with 71 professionals in Palestine who continue to make good work happen. From offices in Jerusalem, Nablus and Hebron, ANERA engineers supervise excellent local contractors as they implement infrastructure projects throughout the West Bank. Because the contractors are local, ANERA staff doesn't have to travel daily to worksites to keep projects moving.

Our deliveries of health care supplies keep on coming too, though our pharmacists report greater-than-ever scrutiny and bureaucratic hurdles from Israeli authorities. Years of experience have prepared our staff well for dealing with these most recent challenges. They seem to work miracles, regularly supplying vital deliveries to impoverished and remote areas. About 65% of ANERA's donated medicine distributions in the West Bank are to the very places that are suffering the most from the road closures, checkpoints and curfews.

No one can say where things are going in Palestine. Is this "the new normal"?

No matter what happens, ANERA will remain steadfast as always, while carefully monitoring the situation, taking steps to stay safe, and delivering programs that continue to meet the needs of local communities.



ANERA's work on an elevated reservoir will provide the Ramallah town of Rantis with the storage capacity it needs to get through periods of water shortages and cutoffs. This is especially important given that the village's 3,065 residents depend mostly on agriculture to make a living.



Staff visit the Bethlehem Old City market. ANERA is modernizing and revitalizing the 90-year-old facility to make it the hub of local commerce that it once was.

Major Infrastructure Projects Underway in Palestine

Under ANERA's Palestinian Community Infrastructure Program

By the Numbers

5 water projects are ongoing in towns throughout the West Bank. Reservoirs and new water networks will provide 15,000 people with reliable water supplies.

3 school construction projects in the Tulkarem, Jenin and Hebron areas will give 1,250 students access to safe, clean and stimulating learning environments.

1 new health clinic in Walejeh village – in an Israeli-controlled area near Bethlehem – will provide 2,500 people with medical services in their neighborhood for the first time.

1 new youth center in Jericho will provide space for 25,900 young people to come for training in vocational skills that will help them enter the local job market.

Pictured (right) is the reservoir ANERA erected in the town of Jinsalfut. A survey of women residents revealed that the amount of time they spent fetching water went from 350 hours a year to 88 hours.



Excerpted from a tribute by Steve Skancke, former ANERA board chairman, honoring Doris Halaby at ANERA's 2013 Annual Dinner.

My first encounter with Doris Halaby sums up her wonderful nature. When I attended my first ANERA annual dinner in 1984, I didn't know anyone except the one who invited me and Doris could see immediately my awkward presence. So she stepped forward to welcome me to the new community.

The first words everyone uses to describe Doris are gentle, generous AND devoted to ANERA's mission.

Actually, Doris Halaby's passion for the Middle East started early in her life. During college she focused on political science and economics and spent some of her time studying at the American University of Beirut. She traveled widely through the region.

Doris joined the ANERA board in 1980. Her deep and lasting concern for Palestinian families and their life of struggle drew her to the organization. And that concern kept her a part of the ANERA family of donors, supporters and leaders.

Doris was instrumental in finding support to build the IT Centers of Excellence in the West Bank and – as one of the first women on ANERA's board – in securing funders to capitalize the Gaza Women's Loan Fund. Both still flourish today.

Through her leadership, Doris exemplified the trust and confidence of ANERA's long-time donors and the commitment she and they have made through the years to the organization's mission.



Steve Skancke and Doris Halaby at ANERA's 2013 Annual Dinner.

Remembering Doris Halaby

September 9, 1918 - December 25, 2015

Our Community

New Images from ANERA's Projects in Lebanon

A collection by photographer Ron Coello, who visited ANERA worksites throughout Lebanon in November and December 2015.



Bekaa, eastern Lebanon
Lice kit distribution



Nahr El Bared Camp
TOMS Shoes distribution



Ein El Helweh Camp
Health education



Akkar, northern Lebanon
Sports field & equipment



Burj El Burajneh Camp
Preschool renovation



Ein El Helweh Camp
Job skills training

“Poor Farmer to Poor Family”

Ahmed Zoerob (left) is from Khan Younis. He recently visited a compound of tiny, prefab housing units serving as shelters for hundreds of families displaced by the 2014 war. He carried a box saying “From Poor Farmer to Poor Family” and it was full of beautiful, freshly picked produce from his farm.

Ahmed is one of 120 farmers in the Khan Younis area of Gaza participating in ANERA’s farmland restoration project, which is helping to bring war-damaged farms back to life. This is the farmers’ first full harvest after the war and it is bountiful for many of them. They are grateful for their good fortune and, though living very humbly themselves, the farmers know that things could be much worse. So they decided to give back by providing some relief for Gaza families who have been less fortunate.

“We want to say thank you for what we have and share it – even if it’s not a lot – with families whose homes were destroyed during the [2014] war,” explains Ahmed.

So far, the farmers have distributed more than 300 boxes of fresh vegetables harvested from their fields to families like the Sumiris (below).

“It is a truly rewarding project for all of us,” says Ahmed.



Read the whole story at
anera.org/gaza



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Include ANERA in your will.

Through bequest gifts, you can demonstrate your commitment to ANERA's work and set an example for others. These gifts mean ANERA will be there tomorrow, so people throughout the Middle East may live with the dignity we all deserve.

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Improving Lives in the Middle East

Since 1968

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In Difficult Times, ANERA's Work Continues

ANERA News

Winter 2016 | Issue 191

Dear Friend:

No one can deny that 2015 was another tough year in the places where ANERA works. The refugee crisis continued to strain Lebanon's limited resources. Unrest in the West Bank made every day unpredictable. And there was almost no reconstruction in Gaza.

As we go into 2016, I am pleased to share this newsletter full of ANERA accomplishments, despite the huge challenges our staff confronted daily. From major infrastructure projects in Palestine to winter boot distributions in northern Lebanon, our projects are making a difference.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for making everything we do possible. Donations from thousands of individuals give ANERA the flexibility to act quickly and respond to the needs our staff identify on the ground.

Happy New Year! Gratefully,



ANERA President

