



# ANERA News

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## A Voice for Humanity in Gaza

Rania Elhilou, ANERA Communications Officer in Gaza

**Y**et again, as I write this, electricity is out in Gaza. The fuel that is needed to operate Gaza's one power plant is in short supply because of the continued closure of Gaza's borders. The cuts last about 18 hours a day, which means no clean water, no heat, and no sewage treatment. This adds up to increased health risks for 1.7 million people who were already suffering. Families here are spending their daily lives trying to secure food, find jobs or get medical care.

So what do we do? We make the most with what we have. When it rains, we collect the water. We use the sun to grow vegetables and nourish our families. We rebuild using recycled materials. When the electricity is on, I will be able to turn on my computer and type this to you.

Since my childhood, I wanted to be a journalist to chronicle our daily struggles so people outside Gaza could understand our lives.

(continued on page 3) ■ ■ ■ ■

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:** Cousins Shaker and Mohammad love the new greenhouse that ANERA built in the family's yard. They have developed a new passion: growing vegetables.  
© Rania Elhilou | ANERA

## by the Numbers

### How You Have Helped People in Gaza

*Statistics on what private donations to ANERA have paid for in Gaza over the past three years*

Number of people connected to clean and regular public water sources: **7,400**

Number of people with upgraded sanitation facilities: **1,470**

Number of Gaza preschools ANERA has renovated: **48**

Number of preschoolers last summer who attended ANERA's health-themed summer camps all over Gaza: **2,000**

Number of families who are now able to grow their own food for consumption and income-generation, thanks to ANERA's home garden project: **53**

Number of new playgrounds installed at schools and in communities: **5**

Cost to send a single shipment of essential medicines to Gaza last month, just one of 60 shipments sent in the past three years: **\$15,000**

## We Said YES

All of us know that when medical emergencies occur, there is no time to waste. The response must be immediate.

From time to time, ANERA faces a different kind of emergency — a medical “opportunity” where immediate action is also required. Routinely, ANERA ships donated medical supplies to partner hospitals and clinics in the Middle East. Sometimes, we are offered special shipments of donated medicine, usually antibiotics or other much-needed pharmaceuticals. Accepting these large containers means that thousands of dollars in shipping and handling costs must be generated with very short notice.

When ANERA was offered two shipments of medicine for Gaza recently, we knew we had to raise the shipping and handling costs before we could say “yes.”

Thanks to an unprecedented response from ANERA's online community, shipping costs for one container were donated in less than 48 hours. And long-time donors to ANERA, Abbas and Samar Zuaier generously covered the cost of the second shipment.

Whether it is a child with an ear infection or an adult facing surgery, thousands of families in Gaza get the medicine they urgently need because ANERA donors respond quickly.

## A Voice for Humanity in Gaza (continued from page 1)

I wanted to highlight the resilience of Gazans. Through my work at ANERA over the past five years, I've been able to do just that. I am thankful to realize that I look at our crisis differently because of my work. I am able to find some inspiration from families who are surviving and building.

I have two powerful tools for reporting from Gaza: words and pictures. I use them to share the voices of those who benefit from ANERA's work and show you how your support makes a difference in Gaza.

### Shaker & Mohammed (photo on page one)

Eight-year-old Shaker and his cousin Mohammed have been inseparable since they were infants. They share everything. Last September, when ANERA provided their family with a 67.5 square meter greenhouse, and an irrigation system and water tank, the boys developed a new shared passion: growing vegetables for the family. They helped Shaker's father plant the seeds and have watched with amazement as the seeds turned into juicy red tomatoes. Shaker and Mohammed can tell you all about how beneficial tomatoes are for their health. Shaker's mother is relieved that the vegetables provide a healthy meal and his father, who is out of work, hopes to sell some of them to raise money for his family.

### Ajyal Al Tahrir Preschool, Khan Younis

The preschool was in terrible shape, with below-standard facilities. The children had to use an old clay basin of water with only four water taps. They would get wet and their feet dirty from the water that sprayed from the taps. But what a change after ANERA's renovations! When I visited the school again I hardly recognized it: the sink had been redone and lowered to the children's height with 10 new taps that let the water flow evenly. Each child could easily reach the taps to fill a cup with clean water. It makes me happy and proud that ANERA can make such a difference.

I know there are lots of people who care about Gaza but don't know how they can help. You probably know a few of them yourself. Please let them know about ANERA's work and the enormous impact they could have on people's lives by getting involved. — Rania Elhilou, ANERA Communications Officer in Gaza



The water taps at Ajyal Al Tahrir Preschool before (left) ANERA's renovations and after (above).



## Gaza Reality series

[anera.org/gazareality](http://anera.org/gazareality)

As ANERA's communications officer in Gaza, Rania Elhilou has been reporting on the humanitarian situation in Gaza for over five years. Her series of films, called *Gaza Reality*, introduces us to all that life there entails. She also takes us into homes where we meet families and individuals who have been touched by ANERA's work.



**A QUIZ FOR YOU:** *Get your pen out!*  
**Match the Before and After Images from Gaza**



Your answer:

ANERA installed this KinderUSA playground in the Ajyal El-Tahrir Preschool in Khan Younis and now the neighborhood children have a safe, fun place to play.



Your answer:

With funding from USAID, ANERA asphalted a kilometer-long dirt road through the agricultural community of Abasan Al Kabira, near Khan Younis. Now children can get to school more easily and farmers can move their livestock and produce to market.



Your answer:

At the Baraem Al-Amal wa Al-Mahaba Preschool, ANERA hung new chalkboards, repaired crumbling walls and roofs, upgraded playground equipment, and installed new sinks and toilets.



Your answer:

Hamda Saleem is from one of the 53 families who have taken part in ANERA's home-gardening project. She now has a greenhouse in her yard, where she grows an array of vegetables for her family to eat and sell for extra money.

ANSWERS (clockwise): Playground - B, Road - C, Garden - D, Classroom - A

# Student in Gaza Writes to a Woman She Admires

Dear Ms. Geraldine Shawa,



I hope to grow up as matured women in my society just like you, my previous headmistress Geraldine Shawa. You were a mentor for poor deaf children, visiting them and never ceasing to care about them. You used to send supervisors and other teachers to check on them, sending gifts, clothes, sweets and sometimes food.

I also want to build mature social and friendly relationships inside and outside my school as you are my high example on that: you used to speak to us quietly, gave us the time, had a permanent smile on your face and turned a blind eye to mistakes we made, which occurred as a result of our deafness.

You are a lady who considers and pays attention to everything around you. You have chosen the right people for our education and you even hired older deaf people to help us in our hearing impairment or deafness to show us that we are able to be successful like them. Those teachers taught us updated sign language to cope with international scientific progress and to cope with our curriculum. Whenever, we asked for trips, you approved them (of course we had to convince you first about the benefits of the trips).

Let me tell you about my hopes. I wish I could be loved by deaf and non-deaf people. What a nice thing to be loved by those around us and get their support. I also want to be around the people whom I love and gain their trust. We together can overcome the difficulties that we all face. I hope I can travel all around the world to gain experience and return home with ideas that can help me serve my people, as well as contributing to my educational development.

Just like you Ms. Shawa, I will strive to publish sign language in my community to put it on the same level as verbal language – the same as you did. You learned about our world of sign language and worked hard to raise it to a higher level. I want to work hard to develop my sign language and to expand it to my peers so that it is a language capable of accommodating scientific progress.

I am deaf but have the power of giving. I am an artist just like you, Ms. Shawa. You are a talented artist. I love you and admire you Ms. Shawa! You are my high example!

With all my love, Wafaa' Abu Aser  
Grade 9 | Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children



Geraldine ("Gerry") Shawa, native of Chicago, lived in Gaza for over 30 years. She founded Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children, the only school for deaf children in Gaza, in 1993. In 15 years as principal of the school, retiring in 2008, she helped thousands of deaf children and adults tap into their abilities and participate fully in their society.

## GERRY'S RESPONSE

Dear Wafaa',

Not a day goes by without my thinking about the students at Atfaluna and hoping that circumstances improve in the Gaza Strip so that they can have a better life. I miss all of you very much.

Thank you for all of your kind words, Wafaa. You and other Deaf people like you are the true future of the Deaf in Palestine. With your giving heart, your many talents, and your intelligence and creative mind, you can play a big role in improving the situation of the Deaf of Palestine. My wish is that one day a Deaf person will be the school principal at Atfaluna. This is when we will know that the Deaf of Palestine have truly achieved success!

Work as hard as you can, constantly challenge yourself, set your goals high, and always remember that there is no bigger joy in life than reaching out to someone in need.

Warmly, Gerry Shawa



# How you can help people in Gaza



Summer is coming and you can make a lot of good things happen in Gaza:

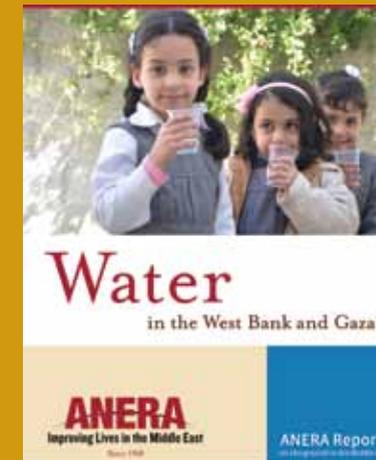
preschool renovations, summer camps, garden planting, and water hook-ups to homes..

these are just a few of the projects that can happen in the summer months with your donation to ANERA.

Please make a donation today.

Send a check in the enclosed envelope or visit [anera.org/donate2012](http://anera.org/donate2012) to give now.

# Have you read our water report ?



[anera.org/WaterReport](http://anera.org/WaterReport)

Save the date!

## ANERA's 2012 Annual Dinner & Fundraiser

when: Friday evening, October 5

where: Renaissance Washington, DC  
Downtown Hotel  
999 Ninth Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Reservations for the event can be made on ANERA's website after July 1.

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## A Voice for Humanity in Gaza



*from the desk of*  
**Bill Corcoran, President**

Dear Friend of ANERA:

Too often when talking about Gaza with friends or family someone will say, "Well, it's complicated."

For our staff working on the ground in Gaza and from the humanitarian perspective of people like you and me, it is not complicated. Innocent people are suffering and they deserve a chance at life with dignity.

In April, our communications officer from Gaza, Rania Elhilou, is visiting members of ANERA's community in the United States to fundraise and tell them firsthand about what she sees every day in Gaza and how ANERA is making a real difference in many people's lives. To her, and to all of us who support ANERA's work, it's simple: we **can** help them, so we **do** help them.

You can help us spread this message. Share this newsletter with others, let them know they can help families in Gaza.

*Bill Corcoran*