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Some Final Thoughts

by ANERA President Bill Corcoran

This month I step down as president of ANERA after a decade of challenging yet incredibly rewarding work. As I reflect on these past 10 years, I'm proud to leave behind an organization that has grown on all levels.

Three of our projects stand out to me as emblems of our success. The Jenin wastewater irrigation project is an innovative technical, environmental and economic effort that has changed the lives of farmers. The early childhood development program has transformed the education sector in Palestine—and no other organization has been as committed to this mission than ANERA. And lastly, the new sports for development program in Lebanon is offering Syrian refugee youth a chance to have fun and learn, while also providing psychosocial support and conflict-management skills.

But for all of our achievements, there have been immense obstacles working in this region of the world. When I became president of ANERA, the 2006 war in Lebanon had just ended. Over the past decade, Gaza has seen three invasions. These conflicts have a cumulative effect—damaging infrastructure and changing lives forever. At the same time, our staff have provided inspiration in these bleakest moments. For several weeks during the 2014 Gaza war we provided a massive delivery of drinking water. I was amazed at the resilience and heart

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: Bill Corcoran at the ANERA office in Jerusalem in 2010. David Snyder, photographer

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of our staff. They worked tirelessly, even as the bombs fell, because they knew people depended on them.

It's this quality that reminds me of the word *samood*, or steadfast support. The situation in Palestine and the Middle East can beat you down and rob you of hope. But it's this *samood* that has ensured our endurance. One of my greatest personal achievements is learning to embody the spirit of this word. No matter how bad things got, I always tried to rally myself and staff.

Unfortunately, the political situation continues to worsen overseas. It's been frustrating seeing the global community fail to stand up and solve these issues.

ANERA was established as a temporary committee but still exists 50 years after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. It's a testimony to our strength but also the lack of political progress. That's why I stress projects and not politics. We can't change the headlines but we can change whether a community has water or health care or schools. I have never allowed politics to drag ANERA down.



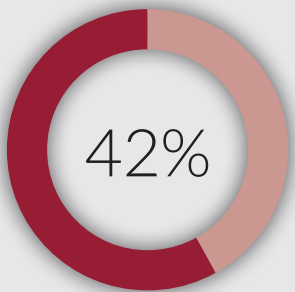
Bill visited Gaza one last time in May 2017 and had this picture taken with the Gaza staff.

Often when Americans think of Palestine, they think of politics. They think of conflict. Of violence. But here at ANERA we're talking families. That's the one thing that binds us together. People share common problems, unlikely as it seems. People worry about putting food on the table and creating a future by sending their children to school. We all have common struggles.

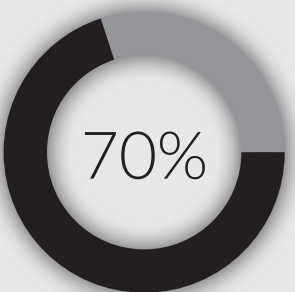
Above all, the past 10 years at ANERA have instilled a deep belief in our common, shared humanity.

As we enter a new era in ANERA's mission and work, I urge everyone to remember that we share a common humanity with those we are helping. We're not so different after all.

GAZA: 10 YEARS UNDER BLOCKADE



unemployment
rate



dependent on
humanitarian aid



7 in 10 households lack reliable running water.



5 in 10 families are food insecure.

Right now, Gaza receives just **2-3 hours of electricity** each day.



delivering
\$105 MILLION+
in donated medicines
& relief supplies.



providing
355,000 PEOPLE
with improved access
to a water network.



helping
1,400 FARMERS
grow healthy food &
provide for their families.

Farmer Gregg Wiitala Appreciates a Wise Use of Resources

I grew up on a farm in South Dakota where I participated in the 4-H youth program. This laid the foundation for a career in agricultural development, which began in the Peace Corps and ended with almost three decades in Africa and the Middle East with USAID. Now, I have settled back into my home in the United States, but I still spend my summers on the family farm.

With a lifetime of farming experience, I have a particular fondness for ANERA's Jenin Wastewater Project. This project recycles wastewater for drip irrigation in the water-scarce West Bank. I can relate to the issues Palestinian farmers face, which are similar to those faced by farmers everywhere. On my own farm in South Dakota we use no-till farming, which entails leaving straw and cornstalks over the soil to retain moisture. Now our corn grows faster, requires less water and even gives better yields.

We have to look toward sustainable development, like those Jenin farmers using improved water technology to increase their productivity. This will result in more household income and a better standard of life for generations to come.

I give to ANERA because I know they get maximum impact out of donations.

As a former grants manager with USAID, I know how to evaluate organizations on this. That's how I know that the portion of ANERA funding that goes directly to programs is excellent. That tells me that ANERA focuses on the field and not the head office.

Farmers in Palestine are like farmers everywhere. They face a certain amount of risk linked to climate conditions. We farmers try to adopt practices that reduce those risks, but we also know that not every harvest will be successful. Luckily, human ingenuity is on our side.

Our Community





The common thread that binds us all

Climate Change, From Paris to Palestinian Camps

Combating climate change is a global issue, yet we recently saw that not all countries are on board. Namely, only three: Syria, Nicaragua and the United States.

The good news is that the Paris Climate Agreement shows how widespread environmentalism has become. All 175 other nations in the world signed on, vowing to protect the environment. It’s one thing that even Israel and the Palestinian Authority agree on. Today, environmental efforts are launching all over the globe—from grassroots projects to institutional policy.

At ANERA we look no further than our own team. In Palestine, we tackled water scarcity by introducing recycled wastewater irrigation to Jenin farmers. Now all the water that would have gone to waste as crops dried up is put to good use, and fields are flourishing.

In Lebanon our team launched a pilot recycling project that **just won the Lebanon Energy Globe Award for Best Environmental Project of 2017**. The Solid Waste Management project tackles the ongoing trash crisis in Lebanon. It’s even more severe in crowded old Palestinian refugee camps, where families live in poverty. Recycling is often non-existent, and there’s no space to dispose of trash.

That’s why our team targeted the refugee camp of Nahr El Bared and the nearby village of Mashha to try out the new project. We recruited a group of motivated youth volunteers from those same places to ensure that it’s truly a community-based initiative.



Volunteers distribute bins and recycling info to Nahr El Bared residents.

There are several facets to this project. First, volunteers distribute waste sorting bins to local families—one for recyclables and one for other household waste. Then they coordinate a trash collection schedule (a first, in many of these under-served communities). And to make sure their environmental message makes a lasting impact, the volunteers conduct awareness sessions to teach community members about waste disposal, health and hygiene.

A Local Scavenger Goes Green

One of our participants is Ayman, a Palestinian refugee in Nahr El Bared. Like his father, he’s a scavenger, traveling the camp with a cart to collect any recyclable items he can find—plastic, aluminum, iron, tin.

Naturally, Ayman was a perfect candidate for our project. He became one of our first participants and helped engage 3,600 households in the refugee camp. He was one of the trash collectors on the newly enforced schedule, carrying a bullhorn to announce his arrival in each neighborhood. “Women and children know my collection schedule, and they come to me with their recyclables before I even blow the horn.”

Now Ayman is on a mission:

“It is not taboo to work in scavenging, and I am very proud of what I do. I’m doing this for my own good and for the good of the environment.”

People like Ayman show that everyone can make a difference in the world. With his bullhorn and waste cart, he’s greening the refugee camp, spreading the word, and creating a brighter future.



Ayman comes through the camp daily with his waste cart.



Friday, October 13

ANERA's Gala

Tapestry of Humanity

The common thread that binds us all

ANERA friends, old and new, are coming together in recognition and support of our shared humanity. This special evening of inspiration will take place at the stunning **National Museum of Women in the Arts in downtown Washington, DC.**

Featuring...



Ahmed Shihab-Eldin

Ahmed is an Emmy-nominated journalist and a Correspondent/Producer for VICE on HBO. In 2015, he was featured on the Arabian Business power list of the planet’s 100 most influential young Arabs. Ahmed often appears as a commentator for CNN, NBC, BBC, MSNBC and Al Jazeera.



Huda Asfour

Huda is one of a new generation of young and innovative Arab women singer-songwriters. Born to Palestinian parents in Lebanon in 1982, she studied at the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music under Khaled Jubran. Huda has collaborated with artists in Tunisia, Gaza, Ramallah, Egypt, Lebanon and the U.S.



Omar Offendum

Omar is a Syrian-American spoken word artist, raised in Washington DC and living in Los Angeles. He has been featured on several major news outlets (Al Jazeera /PBS/ LA Times/Rolling Stone/VICE/NY Times/The European) and toured the world to promote his ground-breaking music.

Raising funds...

to help Syrian refugees and Palestinian families through projects that support education, economic opportunities and dignity for people across Palestine and Lebanon.

Sponsor, reserve a seat or donate...anera.org/dinner

Questions? Please write to dinner@anera.org or call 202-266-9729.

ANERA

Improving Lives in the Middle East

Since 1968

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

Some Final Thoughts From Bill Corcoran

ANERA News

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Dear Friend:

We are sad to report that Bill Corcoran is leaving ANERA after more than a decade as the president.

Under Bill's capable and inspiring leadership and thanks to your support, ANERA has had an impressive impact on the lives of Palestinians and other refugees, delivering relief during crises as well as impactful development programs that make a lasting difference in people's lives.

Among many accomplishments during Bill's tenure, you helped ANERA deliver 449 shipments of vital medicines and supplies to charitable health facilities across the Middle East; renovated 10% of Palestine's preschools; brought 16,000 youths back into classrooms in Lebanon; and linked millions of Palestinians to reliable sources of water in their homes, schools, medical facilities and agricultural fields.

ANERA is in a solid position, thanks in large part to Bill's hard work and your generosity. We will miss him, but we are grateful he's left us poised to continue assisting disadvantaged families in the Middle East.

Sincerely, ANERA Board Chair David Nygaard

