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In Awe of ANERA's Staff and Work

by ANERA President Sean Carroll



I am thrilled to be at ANERA, and grateful for the warm welcome I have received from staff, board and partners. I am only the fifth ANERA president in nearly 50 years of work. ANERA presidents, like our supporters, stick around through thick and thin.

As the years pass, crises come and go, hope and real progress often feel elusive, and this work does not get easier. The world is now witness to—and guilty of—the largest number of displaced people in its history. Most relevant and critical to our mission is the fact that just about half of today's 22.5 million refugees are Palestinian or Syrian. Imagine for a moment if the population in the U.S. suddenly grew to 400 million, and 100 million of them were refugees. That's equivalent to the challenge in Lebanon. It's not easy. But there is plenty of good news.

I've made two visits to the region already and I can tell you that ANERA is making a big difference. Our staff and partners are getting better all the time at what we do—with more local leadership, impact and sustainability. Most important, we are working inclusively and across populations. Our focus is on refugees, but we work with all vulnerable groups in Palestine and Lebanon.

ANERA News

The ANERA newsletter is published quarterly by 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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Editor: Liz Demarest

Contributing Writers:
Sean Carroll, Liz Demarest,
Leila Rafei

Contributing Photographers:
Sean Carroll, Nada Dajani,
Bayan Itani, Rania Elhilou
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ANERA
1111 14th Street NW, #400
Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 202-266-9700
anera@anera.org • www.anera.org

COVER PHOTO: A cart circulates through Rashidiya Refugee Camp in Lebanon collecting recyclables and building a culture of recycling. Sean Carroll, photographer

In Awe of ANERA's Staff and Work continued from page 1

I've met most of ANERA's 140 staff in the field. I saw our well-oiled, effective in-kind distribution network in full operation and I visited 23 of ANERA's development projects in the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon. I am in awe of ANERA's staff and work. Our expert staff is committed to the communities in which they work, because they are those communities. And the results are impressive. Just in the past year, we shipped and distributed 50 containers of medicine and supplies; we connected 130,000 Palestinians to reliable water networks; and we helped 17,700 youths get education in Lebanon.

Let me give you a quick sense of some of the development impact and further potential I saw on my recent visits. We have scores of successful projects in agriculture, infrastructure, education, water, sanitation and health – full of impact. Increasingly, we are cutting across two or more sectors to leverage success and increase impact and sustainability. Here are three examples:

West Bank wastewater reuse for agriculture: Treated wastewater from a Jenin sewage treatment plant was washing down a wadi into Israel until ANERA built a plant to pump the treated water for irrigation. We worked with pioneering farmers who formed a cooperative and invested their own funds to irrigate their fertile farmland with treated water. Now they are farming 8-10 harvests each year instead of one, and they are growing high-value fruit and nuts for the first time. They told me they will make their money back in the first year. This is a true success story – scalable, replicable, sustainable development. With your help, we can scale, replicate and connect this agricultural work with women's food-processing cooperatives for win-win development.

Lebanon waste management: In a local response to the trash crisis in Lebanon, municipal and community leaders in Mashha worked with us to develop a recycling program and build a sorting center. Seven other towns joined in, and the sorting facility is already breaking even. Now we're adding a compost facility, and several more towns from the area want in on the program. When the mayor pointed out wastewater streaming down the hill and heard about ANERA's project in Jenin, West Bank, he was excited to replicate the model in Mashha.

Gaza preschool and women's cooperative: In Zawaida, ANERA renovated a preschool and the number of pupils has increased from 69 to more than 100, because parents in the area like the facility and the curriculum. Connected to the school is a women's cooperative that produces and sells catered food to businesses and families in the area. ANERA is now looking at how to leverage the success in both: one can help the other – that is, a warm daily meal for the preschoolers and steady income for the women's cooperative.

A last word on Gaza: With the announced Palestinian political reconciliation now being implemented, there is renewed hope in this land where people and development have suffered through three wars over the past decade. I promise to work hard to help make life livable in Gaza and, with your help, beyond just livable to hopeful, dignified, prosperous and secure.

With your continued support, we will keep working hand-in-hand with refugees and vulnerable populations in Palestine and Lebanon to help them build better lives for themselves and their families.

In 2017, you and other ANERA donors helped...

connect

25 communities

to water through new reservoirs and water networks.

galvanize

8,074 families

to clear and recycle trash in three communities in Lebanon.

train

9,140 refugee youth

in job skills to jumpstart their careers and support their families.

deliver

\$49 million

worth of medicines and relief supplies in Palestine and Lebanon.

upgrade

22 preschools

to give Palestinian children the right start in their education.

build

6 sports facilities

to create spaces for communities to come together.

inspire

644 students

through extensive renovations of three West Bank schools.

enable

123 health workers

to teach others easy practices for good health in Lebanon's camps.

Learn more about what you made possible in 2017:

anera.org/annualreport

A Continuing Legacy from the Sawabini Family

Julia Sawabini has been an ANERA donor for 20 years and her roots with the organization go back even further. Her father had been a donor before her, and it was he who brought her to the Palestinian cause.

"It was my dad's birthday and I didn't know what to get him. He didn't wear ties anymore," says Julia. So she made a donation to one of his favorite charities, ANERA. She was impressed by its wide-ranging projects in education, water and relief, as well as the people on the ground making sure the donations have impact. "It's for that reason," she says, "that ANERA shines over larger organizations," where you might not know how donations are spent.

Since that birthday gift, Julia's been a regular donor. She even brought ANERA to her wedding. "Jeanne and I had been together for 25 years and we didn't need more stuff," she explains. "So we decided that instead of gifts, we would collect donations." She and her partner each chose their favorite charity. For Julia, it was ANERA. "It's close to my heart."

She stresses the importance of raising awareness of the issues people go through in the region, and particularly about the Palestinian cause. **"I try to post articles on social media, and often the stories I share are from ANERA."**

Sadly, she believes the world is forgetting about the Middle East. "Syrians were the topic for a minute, and Palestinians have been off the radar for a long time."

Julia's father started her relationship with ANERA and he was the one to root her to her Palestinian heritage. As a young dentist, he had been pursuing an advanced degree in the United States when the state of Israel was created in 1948. Suddenly, he was unable to go home. His family ended up scattered wherever they were in that moment: his sister in Lebanon, his brother in Egypt, and the ones who were still in Palestine were "put on buses and moved outside the country."

Julia considers her family one of the lucky ones. "But that doesn't mean we don't still have our roots in Palestine," she clarifies. "And I'll keep my homeland close to my heart by continuing to support the good work ANERA does for Palestinians."



Our Community

Would you like to donate to ANERA?

Visit anera.org/givehope



Olive Harvest in Palestine

As November begins, Palestine is in the midst of its olive harvest season. From Gaza to the West Bank, Palestinian families are heading to their trees to pick, sort, and bring the ripe fruit to local presses to make staples like olive oil and handmade soap. But olives mean much more than tasty cooking and silky soaps. They are the fruit of an ancient symbol of Palestine: rooted to the land, hardy against the odds, and bearing branches of peace. They are also rooted in traditions that families pass down from generation to generation. That's why children learn to respect and love the olive tree from an early age.

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ANERA's Annual Gala

Tapestry of Humanity: The Common Thread That Binds Us All

On October 13, our friends, old and new, came together for ANERA's Annual Gala to raise funds for Syrian and Palestinian refugees and vulnerable communities in need. Our theme was Tapestry of Humanity. This inspiring evening took place at the stunning National Museum of Women in the Arts in downtown Washington, DC. In a departure from our usual sit-down dinner format, there was no assigned seating or tables, which encouraged people to move around and talk to each other.

Ahmed Shihab-Eldin, an Emmy-nominated journalist and correspondent for HBO, served as master of ceremonies and guided attendees through the night's activities. Sean Carroll, ANERA's new president & CEO, delivered remarks on his leadership vision and his recent trip to Palestine and Lebanon. A film featured people from all walks of life in Palestine and Lebanon, who shared their thoughts about our common humanity and how we should all be supporting one another.

Long-time donor and artist, Diane Champion, exhibited original paintings of children whose lives have been touched by ANERA's work. She sold several of the portraits and donated the money to ANERA.

Oudist Huda Asfour and spoken-word, hip-hop artist Omar Offendum treated guests to wonderful performances. Board member Zeina Azzam rounded out the evening with a touching speech on her own experience as a member of the

Palestinian diaspora. Throughout the evening the ANERA community raised much-needed funds to help refugees and vulnerable communities in the Middle East. Guests received hand-embroidered sachets made by Syrian and Palestinian refugee women enrolled in ANERA's job skills courses in Lebanon.

We extend a special thanks to the Embassy of Saudi Arabia for its Diamond Sponsorship, and to our two Ruby Sponsors: the Foundation for Middle East Peace and Robert and Susan Trice. Platinum Sponsors included the Aramco Services Company, Judith Brand, Raed and Hiba Elkhatib, the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, the Hamad | Daoud | Siam Families, Lawrence and Teresa Hamdan and the Olayan Group. Thank you to all who came and supported ANERA's work. We will see you in 2018 for our 50th anniversary commemoration.

"The gala was a courageous change in tradition and it worked perfectly. The new approach did for the guests what they most enjoy about these events: it gave them the ability to mingle and see old friends, rather than get stuck at a table for hours."

Peter Tanous, Gala guest



Make your tax-deductible donation before the end of the year!

anera.org/givehope



95%

of funds are spent on programs in the Middle East



In Memory...

Jamil Shami

January 21, 1939- May 25, 2017

Born near Ramallah and dedicated to peace-building throughout his life, Dr. Shami was a citizen of the world with a Palestinian heart. To the academic world and international community, he was a universally respected, courageous educator and mentor. To his family, he was a source of endless love, warmth, and compassion. As a long-time supporter, Dr. Shami's dedication to ANERA's work was professional and personal, passionate and tireless. And he passed that dedication to his children.

It's time for a

BONUS

You're already helping families in the Middle East. **Why not invite your employer to help as well?**

Many companies will match your donations to ANERA. Some even match gifts from retirees or spouses, or gifts made earlier in the year.

It's easy! Visit anera.org/matching to learn more.

Questions? Contact Hani Almadhoun at halmadhoun@anera.org or 202-266-9711.

ANERA

Improving Lives in the Middle East

Since 1968

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

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ANERA News

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Dear Friend:

As I reported in the last newsletter, about four months ago, Bill Corcoran retired from his post as ANERA's president after 10 years of great leadership. We were all sorry to see him go, but we are grateful he left ANERA in a strong position to continue our important work in the Middle East.

I am pleased now to announce that ANERA's new president, Sean Carroll, took the helm in the middle of September. Sean is an international development and policy professional with 30 years of experience working in Washington DC, Europe and the Middle East. His passion for the Palestinian cause began 20 years ago when he worked as chief of mission for the National Democratic Institute in the West Bank and Gaza and lived in East Jerusalem. The city will always have deep significance for his family, not least because his twins were born there.

I hope you will enjoy reading his report, on pages one and two, about his first trips to visit ANERA projects.

Sincerely,

ANERA Board Chair David Nygaard

