Committed to Jerusalem’s Palestinians

Palestinians know very well how much politics can uproot lives and change the course of life for entire generations. It’s been happening to them for decades, and unfortunately it continues today.

The recent U.S. Administration decision on Jerusalem broke the hearts of many people around the world – people who now wonder what’s next for Palestinians. That’s why it’s more important than ever to assure Palestinians that organizations like ANERA will continue to work toward improving their lives and futures, no matter how discouraging the situation becomes.

With almost 50 years of work throughout Palestine – including Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem – ANERA has been on the ground delivering help where it’s needed most. Our office in East Jerusalem serves thousands in the West Bank through projects in health, education, water, sanitation and agriculture. There is much work to be done. About three-quarters of Palestinians in East Jerusalem live below the poverty line. “Poverty and lack of education, proper schooling and counseling are a combination for a dire future,” says Mazen Dabbagh, ANERA project manager in Jerusalem.

“Poverty and lack of education, proper schooling and counseling are a combination for a dire future.”

continued on page 2
You can find ANERA’s footprints in the narrow, ancient streets of the Old City, where we have recently helped the Spafford Children’s Center support Palestinian mothers and children with special needs. One of those children is seven-year-old Mohammad, who came to the center to develop his motor skills. But for him, it’s about more than school. It’s a chance to live and breathe the history of his ancestral home. “My son loves coming here,” says his mother, Sana. “It is also the commute that he enjoys very much; especially that it involves walking through the markets and alleys of the Old City.”

Since 1973, ANERA has also supported the Rawdat El Zuhur School in Jerusalem through a scholarship program, classroom and equipment upgrades and safety renovations. The institution was founded as a haven for disadvantaged Palestinian girls and women without homes. One graduate, Dr. Ibtisam Muheisen, went on to specialize in education. “We face many overwhelming challenges,” she explains. “Poverty, psychological problems, violent tendencies and lack of adequate care and attention among children are problems we deal with on a day-to-day basis. That makes our presence in the lives of these children as educators fundamental.”

Recently, ANERA joined 25 other international aid agencies in signing a statement of concern over the unilateral decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. As a coalition of organizations with long histories in Palestine, we know that this decision will likely hinder any prospects for peace, with Palestinians likely to suffer the most.

Instead of exacerbating political conflict, we need to continue to provide humanitarian assistance to Palestinians so they can build dignified lives and futures that are their right as human beings. That is why one of ANERA’s mottos is “people, not politics.” It’s people who are directly affected. And it’s people who we serve.
Jerusalem: Living Below the Poverty Line

By the Numbers

There are 865,000 residents of Jerusalem

323,000 Palestinians live in Jerusalem

Of these...

79% live below poverty line

31% are children living in poverty

40% are unemployed

Dedicated to ANERA: Remembering Frances Stickles

Few individuals have been a part of the ANERA community throughout its entire 50 years of service. We mourn the passing of one of those people, Frances Stickles, who died on January 9, 2018.

Frances first came to know the Middle East through her extended family who served at the American University of Beirut. After earning a degree in library science, she too traveled to Beirut where she lived for many years and established one of the first school libraries at the American Community School. She had a strong interest in education, personal talents in the arts and innate skills in organization.

The ways in which Frances gave to ANERA are difficult to enumerate, not only because they are so numerous, but also because she often worked in the background, letting others accept the recognition. She served on the ANERA Board, on and off, for five decades. She recommended the creation of an Advisory Council and became its first vice-chair. She supported the expansion of our Annual Dinners, serving as planning committee chair for many years and then as an essential advisor. Frances also organized the first of two trips to Palestine in the 1990s for board members and supporters. And, perhaps the accomplishment that gave Frances the most pride was her dogged advocacy for the creation of an Education Committee comprised of experts in education and the Middle East to support and advise ANERA’s education programming. Frances served as the committee’s first chairperson.

As Frances’ health declined, we missed her presence at gatherings, calls of both advice and appreciation, and her attention to detail. But the ANERA community can give thanks for the energy, creativity and dedication that defined Frances and her commitment to ANERA. We mourn her passing and celebrate her life.
We didn’t come to an end of our difficulties. Our difficulties have just started. We have tons of aid coming in every day, but we have so many problems that need fixing. In every family, you have either lost a house or a parent or brother or sister or someone has lost a limb. Every family in Gaza has lost something.

Mona Abu Ramadan, Manager of the Milk for Preschoolers program in Gaza, spoke these words during a phone meeting between ANERA’s Gaza staff and headquarters after the bombing stopped. In that meeting, Gaza staff reported that schools are back in session, non-profits have reopened and the rubble is cleaned off the streets. But life is far from normal.

The level of physical destruction is enormous – you cannot go anywhere without seeing leveled buildings, electrical lines down and water pipes severed. The stench of sewage fills the air. Countless families are displaced and living in tents or crowded together into a single family’s home.

Inside

ANERA’s 35th Anniversary Campaign!

Building Opportunities Through Economic Development

The goal of ANERA’s 35th Anniversary Campaign is to raise $10 million for strengthening economic development, education, and health programs. For an update on our progress, see our page 18. Despite the ongoing political instability in the region, ANERA is in the midst of new projects to improve the deteriorating economic situation currently plaguing the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, and Jordan.

AHERA is in the midst of several programs designed to create jobs while helping women and men obtain employment. We work with local communities to provide training, offer affordable credit for small family businesses, and build municipal and agricultural facilities that create employment, expand economic opportunities for the whole region. Our 35th Anniversary Campaign effort provides funding to expand and accelerate this work.

In addition to some of the economic development projects highlighted in this issue, we are purchasing dairy milk from a dairy in Jordan which we will distribute to multi-membered children in Gaza. As we work to help the West Bank, Gaza, and Jordan, we have initiated a mutually beneficial curriculum that trains students in the fields of new and emerging technologies. By partnering with the West Bank, Gaza, and Jordan, we are helping to improve the quality of life for thousands of marginalized people, improving their local economies, and setting courses for a brighter future.

Please read the next few pages and learn about some of the economic development projects your donations support. With your generous support, AHERA will be able to help women find jobs, dignity, and hope for a better future.

Don’t Forget Gaza

We didn’t come to an end of our difficulties. Our difficulties have just started. We have tons of aid coming in every day, but we have so many problems that need fixing. In every family, you have either lost a house or a parent or brother or sister or someone has lost a limb. Every family in Gaza has lost something.

Mona Abu Ramadan, Manager of the Milk for Preschoolers program in Gaza, spoke these words during a phone meeting between AHERA’s Gaza staff and headquarters after the bombing stopped. In that meeting, Gaza staff reported that schools are back in session, non-profits have reopened and the rubble is cleared off the streets. But life is far from normal. The level of physical destruction is enormous – you cannot go anywhere without seeing leveled buildings, electrical lines down and water pipes severed. The stench of sewage fills the air. Countless families are displaced and living in tents or crowded together into a single family’s home.
Early Childhood: Defining the Needs

To do any kind of relief or long-term development work, the first place you start is by gathering data. What is the community asking for? What can be done to help? What works and what doesn’t? Who has already tried? How can we help? When researching ways to support families in the West Bank and Gaza, the answers to these questions can sometimes be tough to come by. In most cases, impossible to come by unless you are working within the community and asking these questions and collecting the data yourself.

It is striking how often the West Bank and Gaza are greyed-out on maps and overlooked. So much becomes distorted through the lens of politics. Even conversations about the needs of young children become highly politicized, when those young children happen to be Palestinian. The collection and dissemination of information about what is helping—what is working in Palestine—can have serious positive implications for the growing global community seeking to know more and to help Palestinian families.

ANERA is one of the few international organizations with networks for collecting data and for reporting on the conditions of life in the West Bank and Gaza. As such, we are pleased to announce that, this winter, ANERA is releasing two reports about early childhood development in the region.

P

ACE in the Middle East requires the efforts and dedicated work of more than politicians, statesmen, and governments. Private citizens—Palestinians, Jordanians, Lebanese, Israelis, Egyptians, and Syrians—must be part of the process. Working and communicating relationships, whatever their borders are among various groups, need to be built to buttress and undergird the peace that the people of the region desire and deserve.

Since the 1993 Oslo Accords were signed by the leaders and Palestinians, the focus of the peace process has primarily been between governments and on economics. It is natural for governments to make peace with one another. Economies must be structurally changed so that they can exist in relative peace, not war, rather than conflict. However, such a limited approach is insufficient. A grassroots approach, which has always been a cornerstone of ANERA’s work, is essential.

Peace is not just between states or adjustments to economics—it must be between and among people. Governments may sign peace treaties, establish security relations, decide how borders are to be managed and arrange the flow of communications. Economies can adjust to a new trade flow which includes further advantages. However, all of these state and economic arrangements lack a very important dimension—the human dimension. Bread and deep popular support is essential to maintain long-term peace. If the peace process is to be viable, it will certainly have to accommodate the interests of the people, not just the interests of governments and businesses.

How are people involved in the peace process? The response, naturally, is that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) must be brought into the process. This is the way in which people from the grassroots are involved, and their role is to make peace and work with those with political authorities. The NGOs are a voice_not just statesmen and politicians—but also those with strengths in the region.

ANERA is one of the few international organizations with networks for collecting data and for reporting on the conditions of life in the West Bank and Gaza. As such, we are pleased to announce that, this winter, ANERA is releasing two reports about early childhood development in the region.
GAZA: Nutrition is a concept that has united a group of determined women in Gaza. Together, they formed the Food Bank Center, a women’s co-op that provides 1,500 children with free breakfasts twice per week. Through this initiative, female chefs earn money to support their families, provide free nutritious meals to preschool children and utilize their cooking skills in kitchens fully equipped by ANERA.

“How your child eats today will affect his or her health throughout adulthood,” says Maysoun, a teacher and participant in the program. She introduced the initiative to her preschool, which is located near the co-op kitchen in Gaza. The project builds upon values she learned when she took part in ANERA’s early childhood development teacher training program. Now the women are thinking of expanding the co-op to allow children to participate in the cooking process, as well as incorporating freshly-picked vegetables from ANERA-supported farms.

WEST BANK: After a sleepless night and several trips to the bathroom, Abdallah Yazeid didn’t feel like himself. Recently, the 12-year-old received care at the medical center in Dura, a town southwest of Hebron. The center is the area’s sole medical facility and it’s always ready to receive patients thanks to a steady supply of medicines from ANERA.

After carefully examining Abdallah, Dr. Salem Dudeen diagnosed him with a tonsil infection and prescribed Clavulin. Since the medicine is taken in liquid form, it’s easy to swallow for children like Abdallah, and its high dosage guarantees a speedy recovery. Treatment and medicines for basic sicknesses like these are expensive and hard to get in the West Bank. But thanks to an in-kind donation by our long-time partner, Direct Relief, ANERA was able to stock the health center with this vital medicine free of charge.

LEBANON: Like many other rural villages in Lebanon, Mashha struggled to accommodate the needs of refugees and local residents. The ongoing Lebanon trash crisis, on top of the refugee crisis, has placed tremendous strain on the municipality. In late 2016 and through 2017, ANERA helped Mashha become the first municipality in the Akkar governorate to manage a recycling facility. The municipality decreased the amount of waste by 30 percent and uses the cash from recyclables sold to pay for operations and the salaries of workers, making the facility self-sustaining.

The project had two phases. During the first phase, the community started sorting waste and recyclables and, by early 2017, ANERA and Mashha inaugurated a sorting facility. We launched the second phase managing organic waste in late 2017. The community mobilized to sort organic waste and build a composting facility to treat organic material. The integrated waste management system has brought Mashha closer to being a zero-waste village.
Benefits of a bequest
- Estate tax charitable deduction
- Fewer tax burdens on your family
- A lasting legacy

How do you make a bequest?
A bequest is one of the easiest gifts to make. With the help of an advisor, you can include or modify language in your will or trust specifying a gift to be made to ANERA as part of your estate plan.

By joining the ANERA Legacy Society, you show your deep commitment to the millions of individuals who benefit from ANERA’s programs.

Notify us of your planned gift
Please notify us if you have included ANERA in your estate plans. In addition to welcoming you as a member of ANERA’s Legacy Society, we would like to thank you for your generosity.

Questions?
Contact Skylar Lawrence at slawrence@anera.org  |  (202) 266-9729
Dear Friend,

In my short time at ANERA, and after a couple of visits to the region, it is already clear to me that almost no matter where you look in Palestine and Lebanon, ANERA is there. In Gaza and the West Bank, and the valleys, coasts and camps of Lebanon, ANERA’s work is present. This is just as true in East Jerusalem.

Some people seem to hope that Jerusalem’s Palestinians might just go away. But almost 40% of Jerusalem’s residents are Palestinian. Unlike many displaced Palestinians, Jerusalemites live where they’re from. They aren’t going away. But they do need our help. Forty percent of them are unemployed and almost 80% live in poverty, including one in three children.

Our 50-year legacy can be seen at many Jerusalem schools, including Rawdat El Zuhur and the Old City’s Spafford Center. ANERA has a long history of working in vulnerable communities that face discrimination daily. Inside these pages, you can read more about the work you make possible in Jerusalem, Palestine and Lebanon. Thank you for your support!

Sincerely, Sean Carroll, President, ANERA