



in this issue

1-2

An Update on Our Work During the COVID-19 Pandemic

3

By the Numbers:

The Latest Numbers from Our COVID-19 Response

3

Why We Support Anera:

Nevadans Fundraise to Help Palestinians Confront COVID-19

4-5

In Solidarity, We Find Hope:

An Update From North Lebanon

6

In Case You Missed It:

The Latest from anera.org

An Update on Our Work During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Anera is carefully following the COVID-19 pandemic and what it means for our people, partners and programs. Our thoughts and best wishes for health and safety are with everyone in the Anera family – staff, donors, partners, funders, and most particularly the Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese and Jordanians living in the vulnerable communities where we work in the Middle East.

Lebanon, Jordan and the West Bank have asked residents to shelter in place and avoid non-essential travel. Gaza has over a dozen confirmed cases (all in quarantine) and there is a real fear of the devastation that an outbreak there could bring about. Camps and communities that already were struggling daily to survive are now more cut off than ever with little to eat, limited health care options, and difficult hygiene conditions.

In order to reduce the risk of spreading or contracting the virus, Anera staff across all regions are now working remotely. There are some situations when staff must visit work sites or interact with each other. In these limited cases, they practice social-distancing protocols and follow standard COVID-19 hygiene guidance.

Anera is continuing our work, while adjusting to the changing circumstances brought on by the coronavirus. Here are a few updates from our programs. >>>

continued on page 2

credits

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.

Material in this newsletter may be reproduced without prior permission, provided credit is given and a copy of the publication in which the item is used is sent to Anera. Subscriptions are free of charge. Any inquiries should be sent to the address below.

Anera's Board Officers

Joe Saba, Chair
Grace Tompkins, Vice Chair
Larry Hamdan, Treasurer
Sanaa Abouzaid, Secretary
Sean Carroll, President & CEO

Editors: Liz Demarest and Dan Riley

Contributing Writers:

Ahlan Chalabi, Liz Demarest, Samar El Yasir, Rania Elhilou, Steve Fake and Dan Riley

Contributing Photographers:

Gonzalo Bell, Serene Dardari, Rania Elhilou, Dan Riley, and Ibrahim and Mohammed Zaanoun.

Anera never rents or sells our list.

ISSN 1966-3584

Anera
1111 14th Street NW, #400
Washington, DC 20005
202.266.9700

anera@anera.org
anera.org

Cover Photo:

Children in a Syrian tented settlement in Bekaa Valley, Lebanon.

Gonzalo Bell, photographer

An Update on Our Work During the Pandemic *continued from page 1*



Transitioning our UNICEF-funded basic literacy and math, English language, and financial literacy courses to an online system. We are piloting the approach in several regions around Lebanon. All students received a tablet, since they have few resources of their own. Anera will test the effectiveness of communication, given poor internet connectivity in Lebanon, and the quality of learning and sharing.

Shipping supplies to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Recent shipments of N95 respirator face masks, sanitizing items and portable oxygen devices will go to the Lebanese Red Cross, Rafik Hariri Government Hospital, and other health care providers on the frontline in responding to the novel coronavirus. We are also locally procuring more items to help Lebanon's overstretched health care system respond to COVID-19.

Sending medicines and supplies to Palestine. A number of shipping containers are either on their way or about to ship to Gaza and the West Bank. They are full of medicines that treat conditions like diabetes, hypertension or cardiovascular disease. They also contain vitamins and health care supplies such as syringes and surgical gloves.

Delivering hygiene supplies to communities. We are working on additional containers full of hygiene and baby care kits, school supplies, and blankets for delivery in disadvantaged communities across Lebanon. And we are locally procuring hygiene and disinfectant supplies to deliver to municipalities and individuals.

Spreading messages for staying healthy. In Lebanon and Palestine, Anera is sharing daily videos and simple written instructions – through social channels and a WhatsApp tree that reaches more than 100,000 people – that promote helpful guidance on topics like properly sanitizing items, Identifying symptoms, social distancing and exercising at home. In Gaza, we are also airing radio spots on local stations promoting handwashing and other hygiene advice.

Anera is staying steadfast as ever in Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan. Our medical donations program is providing significantly increased support at this time. With increased coordination with donors and our front-line partner health clinics and hospitals, we are shipping more to meet this crisis.

We are also going back to donors to increase our planned Ramadan food package and meal donations, which will begin next month. More support from you and others will help us meet the increased needs. We will continue to monitor the situation as it evolves and keep you in the loop as our programs adapt and expand to meet the needs on the ground.

We're all in this together and we'll see each other through.

Follow how Anera is responding during the COVID-19 crisis on our response log: anera.org/response-log

During this era of COVID-19, with your help, Anera is



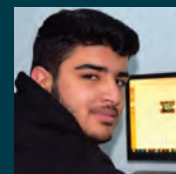
purchasing **32,000 N95 face masks and other PPE** for distribution to hospitals and clinics in Palestine.



procuring and distributing **24 shipments of critical medicines** and supplies to Palestine and Lebanon.



sending out COVID-19 public health information to **100,000+ people in Lebanon**.



piloting online basic math and literacy classes in Lebanon for **110 students and nine teachers**.

WHY WE SUPPORT ANERA | NEVADANS FUNDRAISE TO HELP PALESTINIANS CONFRONT COVID-19

By Michael Arage

I'm a member of *Nevadans for Palestinian Human Rights*. We're currently running a fundraising campaign to support Anera's efforts to respond to the COVID-19 crisis in Palestine and Lebanon.

We're fairly new. We started last fall with a core group of like-minded people, focusing on creating awareness and hosting educational events like film screenings and speaking events. Over the winter we helped get the first official student group focused on Palestinian issues registered at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

From there we decided we wanted to do a direct fundraising campaign for Palestine. Initially we were thinking of water projects. We wanted to help fund a water desalination facility so we Googled it and found the Anera website. We liked what we saw and reached out through the website.

Then COVID-19 happened and our focus shifted. We talked about it and decided we needed to do something to respond to the pandemic.

We've never really done a fundraising campaign before but I'm pretty pleased with the response we've seen. To start, we put the fundraiser on our Facebook page and our mailing list. And from there people shared it with their friends.

When things normalize we would like to continue working with Anera in creating a fundraising campaign with the goal of funding a water desalination plant.



Michael Arage (center) with two other members of *Nevadans for Palestinian Human Rights*.

Start your own fundraising campaign at anera.org/fundraise

In Solidarity, We Find Hope

An Update From North Lebanon

By Ahlam Chalabi, Anera's area manager for North Lebanon



Tripoli, Lebanon.

Lebanon has been in a crisis since October. Since coronavirus arrived here, things are even harder. The situation is really heavy. Day workers and the vulnerable are suffering the most. But difficult circumstances also bring out people doing good work. We're seeing a lot of solidarity and resilience.

As in many other countries, people in Lebanon are being told to stay home whenever possible. I have been working from home for two weeks and, like everyone else, struggling to juggle everything. I need to keep an eye on my kids, who are now doing online education through their school, and still get work done despite the distractions.

Yesterday we had a staff meeting with all of Anera Lebanon's staff, discussing the situation in each area in the weeks since COVID-19 shut down the country. One of the things that has been really striking is how much people are supporting each other.

Community solidarity is strong. It's really impressive to see what is happening across the country. There are many initiatives coming not just from NGOs but also from individuals. There are lots of people asking how they can help, offering to volunteer or donate to help others.

Especially in the camps — Beddawi and Nahr El Bared here in the north — people feel responsible for each other. This is true elsewhere too but because the communities in the camps are smaller and more defined than in a city like Tripoli, it is particularly noticeable.

For Lebanese people, these difficulties we're living through now are shocking. In some ways, refugees have become inured to these hardships and are more prepared. For instance, a Syrian family I know had been doing and making everything at home for years already. They make much of their food, like labneh, at home. Syrian and Palestinian refugees are more likely to have skills in crafts and the like that are very useful right now. Most Lebanese families haven't had to do this before. So now they have to adapt and figure out how to find food every day.

Young people are taking the initiative to buy hygiene supplies and detergents to clean inside people's houses and in shops. This is helping to make people feel safer.

Others are driving around in their cars, using their speakers to broadcast announcements spreading awareness about good hygiene practices to slow the spread of the virus.

Youths are also organizing distributions of bread and food parcels. They pool money to buy the food to give away.

In Nahr El Bared, they are bringing food parcels to households that have volunteered to cook and prepare the food in bulk. Then they distribute the meals to vulnerable families in the neighborhood. We're even seeing landlords waving rent for the next month or two.

These kinds of mutual aid efforts are really critical. Most people in these camps are day workers so staying home means they earn nothing and have nothing to eat.

There are many, many food and cash distribution initiatives and sanitation initiatives happening. People are using Facebook and WhatsApp to communicate and find each other to organize the initiatives and ask people to contribute with money or food donations.

In Tripoli, people are offering to deliver food to people so they don't need to leave their homes.

We need to tell these stories to convey a better image of ourselves. It is important to change the negative perception toward people here, where the media focus only on a few incidents of radicalism, and sectarian conflicts which do not reflect our true image. We are much more than that. Yes, there are many vulnerable people and refugees among us — but it is not all just hardship. We have many good people here who support each other. We love to make art and we treasure all of the things people enjoy everywhere.

As for the programs I am working on with Anera, we are focusing on awareness outreach. We are using

online platforms and our networks with local partners to convey educational information to help minimize the spread of COVID-19. For instance, we are now disseminating our online awareness materials for our beneficiaries and network in the area.

We had been getting ready to launch many of our programs for the year when the pandemic hit and we had to freeze everything. We did have the advantage of having experience working from home in October and November last year during the protests and roadblocks. So we were ready. We've quickly made adjustments to our work. We've been seeing each other (remotely) on a daily basis — even more than before.

Technology has been very helpful. We've conducted many awareness sessions using Zoom, starting with our partners and their staff. Many of these sessions have focused on debunking misinformation about the coronavirus. There is a lot of incorrect information being spread through WhatsApp and Facebook. So we're trying to correct that.

We're also figuring out how to keep ourselves healthy and focused. After the first week at home, the stress began to get to us. So we started to make a point of sharing things we are grateful for with each other. It's been a way of opening up to each other, sharing our concerns, our fears for families and things like that. We thank God for the good things that we have. For myself, I'm grateful for my health and my family. They can see me now more than before. And I'm really glad that I'm able to help others. My job is to serve others and I'm so glad to be able to do that.

Solidarity is the main point for me. This is what will make us more resilient and help us to adapt, and the coronavirus is just pushing us further in this direction. People aren't waiting for the official agencies and government support. They're acting for themselves. It's really giving us hope. In this solidarity we can see the good in others.

In Case You Missed It

THE LATEST FROM ANERA.ORG



Is Gaza Unlivable? by Rania Elhilou, Palestine Communications Manager

A UN report published in 2012 announced that Gaza would be unlivable by 2020. Here we are in 2020 and we're grappling with a global pandemic!

It's hard for the people of Gaza to fully grasp a silent unpredictable enemy like the COVID-19 virus. We are all accustomed to our danger coming in the form of loud explosions erupting unexpectedly around us. So, this stealthy new threat escapes many people's notice.

In this time of fear, we are seeing not only the urgency of medical preparedness but the importance of all of our programs that allow people to sustain themselves through prolonged disruptions. People here are well acquainted with moments of crisis. This time, the rest of the world is also confronted by the danger. Emerging resilient from this latest threat will require all of us to support each other, across boundaries.

FULL ARTICLE
anera.org/gaza-unlivable



Anera's Lebanon Work in the COVID-19 Era

"What does it mean when you shut down a country that was already impoverished and broken?" This is the question Anera's country director Samar El Yassir poses.

No one knows the answer yet, but, based on the facts we know, it can't be good. Most businesses are closed, which means day laborers, drivers, and many others have absolutely no income and have immediately fallen lower in the poverty pit. In the meantime, over a million refugees live in overcrowded camps with little to eat, limited health care, and difficult hygiene conditions. And Lebanon has no safety net programs to help people.

Just as we did in response to the protests that started in October, we are pivoting our programs to respond to the changing circumstances. We are more committed than ever to standing in solidarity with the people of Lebanon and supporting the most vulnerable among us.

FULL ARTICLE
anera.org/covid-lebanon



COVID-19 in Lebanon and Palestine: Anera Response Log

There anera.org/response-log page on the Anera website provides an ongoing report back to donors on the ways Anera is responding during this COVID-19 crisis. We also provide occasional updates about conditions on the ground and our staff.

Please visit and share updates from anera.org/response-log on your favorite social channels. And don't forget to follow Anera:



@aneraorg



Anera is pivoting our programs towards emergency response in this COVID-19 era.

**We are not going anywhere
or letting this crisis slow us down!**

Together, our Anera community is delivering vital medicines and personal protective equipment. We are also providing relief to Palestinian, Lebanese, and Syrian families.

Will you make a donation today to help communities in Lebanon and Palestine that are especially vulnerable to COVID-19?

Visit anera.org/covid-relief
or complete the enclosed envelope.

The CARES Act

The new Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act may help you deduct your donations to Anera.

For those who don't itemize their taxes, the bill allows you to claim up to **\$300 in charitable contributions** without having to itemize them.

For those who do itemize, the bill increases the cap on annual giving from 60 percent of adjusted gross income to 100 percent.

Anera's Annual Dinner

Friday, October 2, 2020
in Washington, DC

At this time our event is going forward as planned. We will carefully monitor the situation with the coronavirus and update you if circumstances require an altered format. Please visit anera.org/dinner to support the dinner and stay informed.

Save the date

An Update on Our Work During the COVID-19 Pandemic

ANERA NEWS, ISSUE 208 | **SPRING 2020**



A young Palestinian girl in Gaza washes her hands with water that was recently connected to her home thanks to Anera. The poster on the wall is part of Anera's public health outreach on proper handwashing techniques.