



# Projects

Does your organization implement unique projects or programs? Share them with the *Monday Developments* community. Send your project's name, implementing organization, location and funder(s) along with a brief description of 400 words or less to [cbrobst@interaction.org](mailto:cbrobst@interaction.org)

## Mama: Together for Safe Births in Crises

Organization

**Women's Refugee Commission**

Location

**Crisis-affected countries worldwide**

Funders

**MacArthur Foundation**

### The Project

More than 1,000 women and girls die every day from pregnancy- or childbirth-related complications. The majority are in countries that are in the middle of war or its aftermath.

Access to reproductive health services can be particularly challenging for women displaced by conflict and natural disasters.

To bring greater attention and support for the maternal health needs of women and girls in crisis-affected settings, the Women's Refugee Commission, working with M4ID (Marketing for International Development), a Finnish communications firm, has created "Mama: Together for Safe Births in Crises," a communications initiative designed to help practitioners help one another.

Mama uses social networking to connect frontline maternal health workers in crisis-affected areas by building a professional community of practice. It is the first initiative to master the technical linkage between Facebook and SMS texting, which is critical for practitioners based in the deep field who do not have regular Internet access.

Mama recognizes and supports clinical practitioners working on maternal health issues by helping them to give one another information about and encouragement to use proven standards and tools; a community where they can support one another; and ways to increase their skills level and receive recognition for their work.

The elements of Mama include: a pre-MISP (Minimum Initial Service Package for Reproductive Health in Crises) quiz to assess members' knowledge of the MISP, an international standard of care; a "share your practices" survey that highlights a practitioner's areas of need; a best practices and lessons learned corner for members to showcase good practices; Mama SMS (text messaging), which allows members to participate by cell phone, even when they do not have access to the Internet; a "lives saved counter" to see the collective impact of saving maternal and newborn lives; and Mama Mentors, field experts who visit the community on a monthly basis to provide technical information, professional development advice and words of recognition and encouragement to the community.

Mama demonstrates the power and possibility of using social media and new technology to create networks and support systems where they are needed most.

To become a member of Mama, go to [www.facebook.com/mama.wrc](http://www.facebook.com/mama.wrc) or for more information contact Jennifer Schlecht, Program Officer, Reproductive Health, Women's Refugee Commission, tel. 212.551.3029 or email [JennS@wrccommission.org](mailto:JennS@wrccommission.org).

## "Right Start" Early Childhood Development Initiative

Organization

**American Near East Refugees Aid (ANERA)**

Location

**West Bank**

Funders

**Private donations**

### The Project

Palestinian children suffer from multiple risk factors and disadvantages that impede

their growth and development. Most children live in poverty. Six out of 10 families in the West Bank and Gaza live below the U.N.'s poverty line. Malnutrition and ill health are serious problems. These factors are compounded by high levels of stress and anxiety that further hamper people's lives and future prospects.

And yet, research has proven that early childhood (0-8 years) is the most critical period for developing a child's cognitive, social, emotional and physical skills. Depriving children of stimulation, good health and nutrition, education and quality care in those early years compromises the future of Palestinian children.

Only one-third of Palestinian children have access to essential early childhood programs and services. The few preschools that do exist are inadequate for the care and education of children. They lack essential resources and equipment appropriate for youngsters under five. Most preschool teachers are unqualified and poorly paid. Children are subjected to traditional teaching methodologies that hamper the kind of creativity and inquisitiveness essential for developing young minds.

With private donations and grants, ANERA has launched a multi-year program in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and key stakeholders in the West Bank to improve the quality of early childhood development and to help map out a national strategy for early childhood education. The key to its success is close collaboration and the commitment of teachers, parents and the community.

The unique initiative has a four-pronged approach to improving the quality and value of preschool education: training and mentoring preschool teachers with a specific focus on early childhood development; upgrading preschools to make them child-safe learning environments; developing vital childhood resources for children, teachers and parents; and building a national early