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Mercy-USA News

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Mercy-USA Steps Up to Help Newly Arrived Afghan Refugees.

Because of the severe cutbacks to refugee resettlement during the Trump administration, the official U.S. resettlement agencies are understaffed and unprepared to

provide the bare necessities for more than 70,000 Afghans in a short span of time.

The federal government provides 90 days of assistance, after that, *cont...*

Mercy-USA for Aid and Development

is a nonprofit relief and development organization dedicated to alleviating human suffering and supporting individuals and their communities in their efforts to become more self-sufficient.

Incorporated in 1988, Mercy-USA's projects focus on improving health, nutrition and access to safe water, as well as promoting economic and educational growth around the world.

- Registered with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- Special Consultative Status with the United Nations
- Member of InterAction

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Mogadishu, Somalia
Antakya, Turkey



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Afghan Refugees are safe from harm but far from feeling safe in America



Mercy-USA Volunteer Coordinator, Anam Ahmed (far left) and Program Asst., Bibimah Arabzada (center) visit two families newly arrived from Afghanistan to help with questions left unanswered by overwhelmed refugee services.

Continued from pg. 1... the “resettled” refugees are typically on their own to find jobs and everything else needed to survive. Most newly arrived Afghans in Michigan speak very little or no English. They speak several different languages and dialects which has overwhelmed translation services. Families are left alone and helpless without enough assistance to understand their new environment.

In Michigan, where Mercy-USA is headquartered, there are at least 1,600 newly arrived Afghans. Housing has been a serious problem due to the affordable housing crisis. Most families were placed in hotels for months while they awaited placement in apartments, leaving them in limbo without adequate cooking facilities or school enrollment for their children. Those that have been placed in housing are often forced to accept housing that is too expensive and many are unsure about how they will make

ends meet once their resettlement cases are closed and rental assistance ends.

These families are completely unfamiliar with American life, and struggle with everyday tasks that we take for granted such as paying bills and reading their mail, scheduling a doctor’s appointment, filling a prescription, navigating the bus system, or even operating a coin laundry. Most are unable to obtain drivers licenses or purchase vehicles which makes getting to and from any job difficult. Many mothers are pregnant and families are unfamiliar with the healthcare system and how to arrange for prenatal care and birthing services.

Mercy-USA has contracted with a talented Afghan refugee as a program assistant in Michigan. She has experience working in the humanitarian sector and is fluent in multiple languages spoken in Afghanistan. She is helping our staff

gain access to and create programs for Afghan refugees so that we can assist them to get on their feet and thrive in the United States.

Mercy-USA’s current programs for these families include:

Cultural orientation/integration support

Home visits to explain common tasks such as how to access public transportation, understand and pay bills, use SNAP and WIC benefits or schedule a doctor’s appointment, etc.

Store gift cards for vulnerable households

Gift cards promote independence and encourage the Afghans to shop on their own without assistance.

Gift cards can be used to purchase necessities such as food, school clothes and supplies for their children, household goods, cookware, etc.

Nonclinical case management and support for pregnant mothers

Contingency planning and coaching to understand how emergency services work:

Birth plans for routine pregnancies (scheduling transportation to and from the hospital and arranging childcare for existing children, etc.)

Mobilizing the community to arrange in-kind support for mothers to be (collecting essential baby items and working with volunteers to arrange local events to welcome newborns)

A Harrowing Escape and a Pain-Filled Arrival

Hasan Muhammadi led a happy and healthy life in Afghanistan. He had a job and his six children were attending school. When the announcement was made that the US was withdrawing from the country, Hasan and his family suddenly found themselves in danger. Like so many Afghans, Hasan had been working alongside the U.S. Government.

Hasan decided to try to evacuate his family during the chaos that ensued after the announcement. He went to the airport to get passage for his family, planning to call them once he was sure they could all evacuate. Amidst the chaos, he was caught in a gruesome suicide blast that cost him one eye and damage to some of his internal organs. It took his family 14 hours to enter the airport and find him, but thankfully they were able to evacuate together.

Like most Afghan evacuees, Hasan and his family had no choice but to live in temporary shelters while waiting for clearance to enter the United States. His family was living in a tent with 200 other people (men, women, and children) crammed together while he suffered with extreme pain from his injuries.

After arriving in Michigan, Hasan and his family spent two months in a hotel. Much of this time was spent going back and forth to the hospital for surgeries. Unfortunately, not all of the surgeries were successful and Hasan continues to suffer. Even after being relocated to a rented home, the family is in limbo, unsure about how they will continue to pay their bills once the resettlement assistance dries up. He is not sure if he is eligible for disability or other forms of public assistance.

Aside from health problems, the Muhammadi family is struggling like most newly arrived Afghans. Their children are not yet in school even after several months due to registration mix ups. Hasan and his wife Sakina can’t drive and none of the family members can speak English. They struggle with daily tasks such as understanding how to interpret or pay bills and how to schedule doctors appointments or refill prescription medications on their own. The resettlement agencies are too overwhelmed to provide each family with the individualized support that they desperately need to manage American life.

Like most recently evacuated Afghans, the Muhammadi extended family members are still in Afghanistan. Hasan’s wife, Sakina is struggling with the responsibility of taking care of her husband and children alone while dealing with survivor’s guilt. Back home she was responsible for taking care of many different aspects of daily life for her parents and siblings. She tries to help through text messages even while her own life is uncertain and frightening.

While things are difficult, there is still hope. Although the Muhammadi family is struggling to understand the culture and language in America, they are thankful for the kindness of Americans. Their oldest son, Sina, is not yet in school, but he is working hard to learn English on his own. He enthusiastically showed Mercy-USA staff the Youtube videos that he watches in order to learn English words and phrases. He has taken up many of the responsibilities that his father can no longer



Hasan Muhammadi and his 13 year-old son, Sina in their rental apartment.

manage. He helps his mother with shopping, cooking and childcare every day. It is a lot of pressure to put on a 13 year old child. Mercy-USA has offered assistance to the family as detailed at left. There’s a huge need and Mercy-USA is working hard to provide a helping hand to our new neighbors.

Saving the Lives of Malnourished Children in Somalia

Imagine living in a remote area with no access to a medical facility and then your baby falls ill, that is the story of many mothers and children living in Somalia.

8-month-old Hafsa's mother told us, "My daughter has been sick with vomiting and diarrhea for a week."



She is not eating well and there was no nearby health clinic I could bring her to, but when her health began to deteriorate, we traveled here for help."

Hafsa's family is from a nomadic community living on the Ethiopia - Somalia border, very far from Abudwak town where the Mercy-USA Midnimo Referral Hospital is located.

Hafsa was brought to the Center triage. She was weak and dehydrated. The health workers immediately transferred her to the nutrition department for assessment and further management.

The baby was screened at the nutrition department and her vitals were taken. She was severely malnourished and suffering with fever, diarrhea, and dehydration. She was admitted to the Stabilization Center, where she received specialized nutrition treatment, including F75 therapeutic milk, hydration fluids, antibiotics, and constant monitoring by the Center's nurses and doctors.

After a few days, Hafsa had stabilized and was moved to the second phase of treatment where she was upgraded to F100 therapeutic milk to boost her weight and immune system. She would stay at the Stabilization Center for a few more days and later on transferred to the Outpatient Therapeutic Program where she would stay for three months until she reached a healthy weight.

Hafsa's mother was educated on the Infant and Young Child Feeding methods, including training on the warning signs for malnutrition in children, and the importance of completing the treatment.

The Hospital's Stabilization Center is where children below the age of five suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition with medical complications who are at high risk of dying are admitted.

With funding from UNICEF and USAID, Mercy-USA is offering specialized nutrition treatment to children and mothers by providing the Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS). The objectives

of EPHS are to increase access to, utilization of, and the quality of health and nutrition services especially for women, children, and vulnerable populations in an integrated manner. Through EPHS, Mercy-USA is working with Somali Health Authorities to build local capacity and infrastructure. Over time, this will help those authorities to manage and run their healthcare systems and deliver quality services to the population.



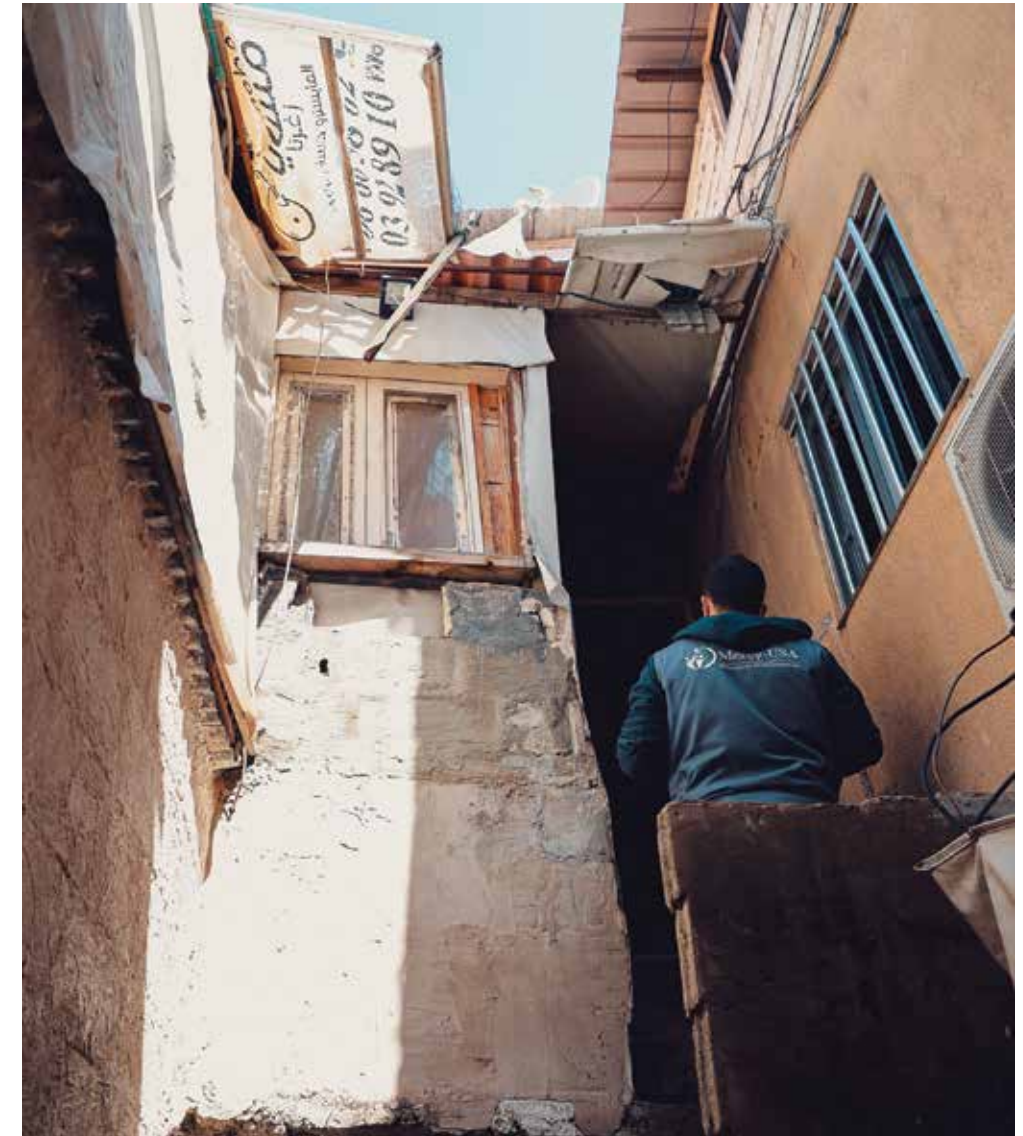
Hafsa's doctor was thrilled to see her at a follow up visit, blooming with good health several months later.

"Tin Neighborhood" in Lebanon a Focal Point for Relief

The financial crisis in Lebanon is spiraling out of control. The country's currency has lost 90% of its value, and prices for basics like food and fuel have reached all time highs. At least 60% of the population lives in poverty, and nearly 90% of refugees from Syria are living in extreme poverty. To make everything beyond worse, approximately 80% of Lebanon's wheat and corn oil (cooking oil) is imported from Ukraine and 15% from Russia. The price of fuel has increased by 33%, and food prices have risen by 1,000%.

For Syrian and Palestinian refugees and the poorest Lebanese, this cruel situation has made their lives more desperate. Hay Al-Tanak, one of the poorest areas in Tripoli, is essentially a slum made of tin roofed homes. These homes are completely neglected, unfinished, and lack electricity, fridges, stoves, ovens, and any heating or cooling. During our initial assessment of this area consisting of approximately 110 homes, people told us that they have not had any meat in months and often have to choose between buying their medications or bringing in a little food so not to starve.

Our initial humanitarian response is hot meals for all residents for the month of Ramadan. Our mobile kitchen is currently stationed in the neighborhood and residents are given a nutritious hot meal that consists of a mix of meat, vegetables, grains, dairy, fruit and carbohydrates that meets the caloric needs of families of all ages.



Ending the Misery of Tent Homes in Syria

Nearly 3 million people are displaced in NW Syria. Thousands are living on the dirt in crowded camps in tents. These tents are designed to last one year, and yet they've been in use for three, four or more years. They are often in tatters or patched and repaired beyond recognition. A tent flap does not provide a single mother with children any security in an increasingly desperate situation. Torrential rains flood these tents and all who are trying to live in them. At least a third of these tent homes are headed by single women with children who make up half the population. It's an unfair and miserable situation.

Mercy-USA will be providing new semi-permanent homes to families that feature a small kitchen, bathroom, sleeping area and a door that locks. These homes will be raised off the ground to provide warmth and safety from the floods that wash away tents every year. Having their own private bathroom will help restore some dignity to families who have been suffering for so many years.

Features of these innovative homes include:

- Durability: 10-15 years of hard use
- Full insulation from cold and heat
- The structures are waterproof
- High privacy and sound isolation
- Easy to repair or improve.
- Mercy-USA will provide needed accommodations for persons with disability or mobility issues.
- Will be installed above ground to avoid flooding that has plagued the camps for years.

Each home will cost \$5,500 to complete. Mercy-USA is raising funds to transform entire camps at once to avoid creating tension and disparity among neighbors.



The shelter's components are manufactured in neighboring Turkey and will be installed on site. The homes will be built for all so to avoid tension and disparity among neighbors.

Each home features a full bathroom with shower, toilet and sink.

The multipurpose room will serve as sleeping and living space.

Each home has a kitchen with a sink and workspace for food prep.

Where We Work • mercyusa.org



Albania

English and computer skills training for orphans
Read to Succeed program for school-age children and teens



Bosnia and Herzegovina

Vocational and career training for orphans, at-risk teens and young adults
Read to Succeed program for school-age children
Assistance to special needs students



The Gaza Strip

With grant funding to UNRWA, support for a special school for blind and visually-impaired elementary school-aged children.
Health and vision screenings



Indonesia

Aiding farmers and local communities with sustainable farming methods. Also assisting farmers in forming cooperatives.
Seasonal food aid



Kenya

Seasonal food aid
Emergency Relief



Lebanon

Mobile Medical Clinic for Syrian Refugees and their hosts in Wadi Khalid
Healthcare for Palestinian Refugees
Nutritional support for mothers and children
Cash assistance for vulnerable Lebanese and Refugees
Seasonal food aid



Pakistan

With funding to implementing partner, The Citizens Foundation (TCF) built and supports a secondary school in Sindh Province



Somalia

Approximately 750 new or rehabilitated wells for access to clean drinking water throughout Somalia including emergency drought relief
Nutritional support and health services for mothers and children
Hygiene and sanitation training and promotion
Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention



Syria

Covering the daily food needs for approximately 250,000 vulnerable persons in northern Syria
Winterization projects for vulnerable children and their families
Semi-permanent homes for Syrian families
Nutritional support and health services
Hygiene and sanitation training and promotion



United States

Seasonal food aid
Support for refugees
Support for Detroit area homeless shelters and disadvantaged students

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