

Mercy-USA

for Aid and Development®

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A recent dispatch photo of the destruction caused to one of the neighborhoods in which Mercy-USA works in Aleppo, Syria.

Aleppo is Burning

Recent devastating news of air strikes on hospitals and civilian areas in Aleppo are not new but we are sadly grateful that the world is finally waking up to the human tragedy that has been mounting in Aleppo since we began working there in 2012.

At the time of printing, Mercy-USA is praying that the current cessation of air attacks holds and the residents who have been left behind in Aleppo can be helped to survive without daily threat to their existence.

Our field team members live in Aleppo alongside the families

Mercy-USA helps with food aid, medical care and other humanitarian aid, so it's very personal to us when news comes from them that they are experiencing air-strikes and bombings. They are on the front lines of this humanitarian effort and we're proud of them and the work they're dedicated to carrying out for the sake of children and their families in Syria. They often are the first ones to tell us of devastating news in real terms of families who suffer the effects of this devastating situation.

Read a few of their stories on the next page.

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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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Nairobi, Kenya	

In Syria, City or Countryside—Security is Worsening

Aleppo, Syria where Mercy-USA for Aid and Development works has been called “the world’s most dangerous city.” More than five years on, this disheartening moniker is only more true with each passing day. Over the last two months, pro-Regime air-strikes and barrel bombs have again pummeled

the city. This violence leaves no one untouched—one of our team members’ home was partially destroyed, but thankfully he and the other residents were not in the building at the time of the bombing. Unfortunately, the same can not be said of the two families we work with in the stories below.



Manal, is a mother of four with a baby on the way. The family has been surviving on the meager income from a small vegetable stand Manal’s husband runs. We knew Manal from her regular OB appointments at our Mother and Child Health Clinic because she



has experienced multiple miscarriages in the past, but has been hopeful for this pregnancy. Despite the war and destruction all around them, they were working hard to live a life worth living until at the end of April a pro-Regime airstrike hit their home, wounding three of the children and killing their oldest child, Abdulrahman.

One our team members said, “He used to pass by our office every day and give me a smile, and now he’s gone. His mother is devastated.” The other children have recovered but Manal will probably never fully get over the loss of her precious oldest son. Our doctor and medical staff continue to monitor her health, and of her remaining children, but we know food or medical care only heals the body, not a broken heart. Manal gave us permission to tell the story of her family’s terrible loss of Abdulrahman so that you will not forget about them and all her neighbors who are trapped in Aleppo.



Ma’mun (above) lives with his wife and children in the Aleppo neighborhood of Bab Al Nayarb.

Last month, his block was all but destroyed including his home, but since they have no where else to stay, they’re living in the one small room that was not blown up. In order to enter or leave the dwelling they have to climb over rubble and carefully make their way out down the road. Ma’mun tells us that his little girls, (above) are so traumatized that even the smallest sound like a door closing makes them scream and cry. We’re helping Ma’mun with food baskets and other essential aid.

As the war rages on, families have fled to makeshift camps in the countryside due to an extreme of lack of security. Thousands have been forced to live without sanitation, electricity or the basic comforts a home provides. Up until recently, they felt they had a better chance of surviving away from the city and closer to the Turkish border, which is now closed to them. Last month, a week after our team visited and made a needs’ assessment, this assertion proved untrue for a camp in Idlib province near the Syria-Turkey border. A missile struck the encampment of family tents killing 30 people, many of them women and children.

Despite the security risks, we’ve been able to truck food and other aid out to several camps to help children and their families so far this year. We distributed over a hundred tents to families this spring who have been living in tattered shelters for years now. A mother of several young children told us that her previous tent was so dark that they felt they were living in perpetual nightfall. The new tents are strong, bright and insulated.

Little Mariam below is one of 15 children and only knows life in a tent. Her mother Um Ahmad told us she and her husband had fled to the camp four years ago. She was so pleased to leave her dark, battered and cramped tent for the two new ones we gave to the large family.

We strive to remind our supporters that their donations go to children and their families who have been left behind in Aleppo and its surrounding countryside. Our Syria programs are 100% privately funded so support is needed to keep them alive until a solution for peace is found.





Nine-year-old Argest Duraku in front of his public school Albania. His teacher saw the beginnings of trouble for the child and felt intervention was needed before it was too late.

Helping While Possibilities For Their Futures Are Strong

What happens to a boy who is the son of a poor widowed mother in Albania, a country still struggling after forty years of communism and political upheaval for the last twenty? Argest is nine and attends school in Tirana, Albania's capital and largest city. We visited Argest's school and heard that he had been struggling to stay focused and achieve his potential. His teacher said that while he was capable of learning and doing well academically, she felt there had been something emotional or social getting in his way of excelling.

Gurie, his mother works in a nursery school and survives on an income of only \$240 a month. This salary is barely enough to support Argest and her with the basics. Even before his teacher



recommended that she find some additional help for Argest, Gurie was worried about him. He had begun roaming the streets with other boys after school while she was at work. That's when she knew something had to change for him but was already stretched beyond her capacity to provide more for her little boy. She learned about the Mercy-USA after-school training program for orphaned and at-risk kids, and enrolled him.

Now, Argest arrives at our program after school and learns how to use a computer and can also begin studying English. We also provide vital life and character building skills. Kids who are growing up in single parent homes are at the highest risk for the worst any society has to offer. Our teachers are not only there to teach kids how to use computer software or train them in English, they're there to help inspire the children toward a future where they can imagine themselves to be anything they dream.

We also bring in child psychologists, police and health department representatives to provide the kids with real life information and a safe space to learn and ask questions.



Opening Young Albanian Imaginations Through Reading and Literature

As Albania emerges from the legacy of communist rule, free access to information through the printed word is still lacking. Since 2011, Mercy-USA has been assisting schools in Albania to open or expand libraries. Every year, we deliver tens of thousands of books so children and teens get access to new literature to open their minds to the possibilities of the world.



Argest with Mercy-USA Training Program Coordinator, Lllazar Dako. Lllazar is a mentor and positive role model for the nine-year old.

boy. She couldn't afford private courses for Argest, so she took a chance and tells us she is so grateful because Argest has something he looks forward to doing. He doesn't have a computer at home, so he can come to the Mercy-USA after-school program and explore the world through the Internet. He can stay in touch with distant family and find answers to questions about all kinds of things. Gurie says he has become more disciplined; he completes his homework; and his behavior at home is improved.

We're happy to hear this, especially, since Argest is still young and has years to hone his skills with us and find opportunities that wouldn't have been available to him. Youth unemployment is as high as 32% in Albania and we believe the combination of hard skills like computer literacy, English and the social skills we incorporate into our programs will have our students rising above that crippling statistic. Argest told us he wants to be a doctor, and our teachers, and mentors tell Argest they believe he'll do it, and they're there to help him along the way!

Normal Weather Patterns Aren't Returning to the Horn of Africa Say Scientists, We're Doing What We Can to Help with Clean Water.

Scientists say that climate change is drying out the Horn of Africa, including Somalia to an extreme level. By examining paleoclimate records going back 2,000 years leading researchers are now predicting that this part of the world is experiencing a unique drying trend portending more years of drought if their models prove correct. That's a frightening prediction if you're a Somali goat farmer or a small business owner in Mogadishu. The fragile stability being forged in the country could easily falter if more people are left without safe access to clean water. Mercy-

USA believes that by helping rural and urban communities with the basic of life—clean water, we can make positive contributions to the entire country's steps toward stability and a resurgence of prosperity. Safe access to clean water improves the lives of an entire community but most of all, it improves the quality of life for women and girls, as the chore of fetching water falls on them in this traditional society.

The story of Ibada, a 38-year-old widow who lives in Misra xaraare an agricultural village in Middle Shebelle Region is one example of how safe access to clean water can help facilitate small steps toward a more educated and successful family despite great challenges.

Ibada has three daughters and one son. She is the sole provider for her family with an income she earns from her vegetable stand



Ibada, her daughters and other girls from her village enjoy the first clean drops of water from the new well built by Mercy-USA this last Spring.

in the area marketplace. When Mercy-USA built a well in Ibada's village this spring she explained how the task of getting water would consume much of her or her eldest daughter's day. The task wasn't only time consuming, it was dangerous, "I remember several times when we had to walk to the river to get some water but we feared attacks from either men or even wild animals such as crocodiles."

Fetching water is exhausting and treacherous. Women and girls walk an average of 4 miles to carry 5 gallon water cans on their backs while hoping to avoid wild animals, strangers, or worse. In addition, the hours spent each day to bring this necessary basic of life most of us take for granted means those hours are not spent learning in school, growing and improving a business, or caring for

younger children. If clean water isn't accessible, any water, even if contaminated, is consumed. Diarrhea or other water-borne diseases can take the life of a child needlessly.

Clean water is life for a family in rural and urban areas, and it's not a difficult problem to solve. Our donors have helped us build about 500 wells in communities across Somalia. As Ibada reminded us last month, "My daughter will now concentrate on her education. Many times I had to cut her studies short because water was a higher priority for us." Now Ibada can improve her business, care for her younger children and make sure all her daughters get the education they need to do even more toward a healthy family and a thriving community.

Wells Built in Somalia Require Expertise and Hard Work to Serve a Community



Several times a year our field staff assess the need for safe access to clean water across Somalia. So far, the need still outstrips the resources we have from private donations, so with the knowledge each well is needed by more than those we can help, we make sure the community is committed to its success. We train community members on the maintenance of the finished well to make sure it remains operational long into the future. By involving the people who will use the well, we make it a focal point for community life in the village, and there's pride in its longevity as a precious resource to be managed and maintained.

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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
- Agriculture Education Center to aid farmers, and local communities with sustainable farming methods

The Gaza Strip

- School lunch program in Gaza serving approximately 1,500 students

India

- Seasonal food aid

Indonesia

- Aid farmers and local communities with sustainable farming methods. Also assist farmers in forming cooperatives
- English and computer skills training for orphans

Kenya

- Aid farmers and local communities with sustainable farming methods. Training in business development and marketing for farmers.

Lebanon

- Syrian Refugee assistance in Wadi Khalid, Lebanon
- Mobile Health Clinic serves refugees four times a week providing vaccines, pre-and post-natal checks and regular medical exams.

- Palestinian Refugee Assistance in Beddawi and Nahr-Al-Bared Palestinian Refugee Camps
- Vocational training courses

Somalia

- To date about 500 new or rehabilitated wells for access to clean drinking water throughout Somalia
- Nutritional support and health services for mothers and children
- Hygiene and sanitation training and promotion

Syria

- Monthly food baskets for 1,000 vulnerable families in Aleppo, Syria
- Winterization projects for vulnerable children and their families
- Blankets, mattresses, mats for displaced families
- Hygiene packages for 1,000 vulnerable families
- Mother and Child Health Clinic



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- Monthly Donation** \$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 Other \$ _____
- Check**
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