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Mercy-USA News

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Syria Rapid Response Teams Stop Malnutrition Before it Becomes Deadly

Northern Syria's camps for internally displaced persons are crowded and lacking in essential services especially healthcare. Mercy-USA's Rapid Response Teams visit the

homes of families in these camps to provide emergency nutrition, health and protection services for women and their children under five. *Continued...*

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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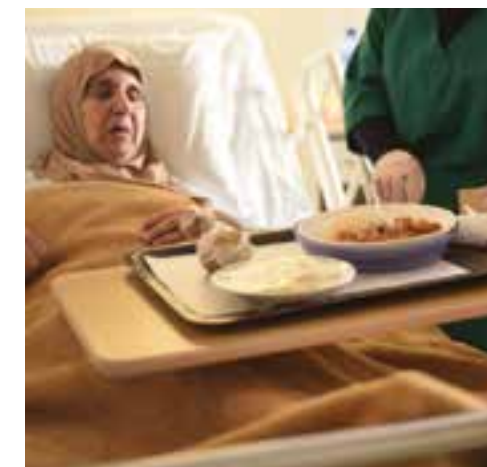


Hospital Nutrition Program in Lebanon

According to a recent United Nations report, "Lebanon's public health system has been "stretched beyond its limit", due to the double impact of the economic crisis and the pandemic. Skilled health workers, as well as teachers, have fled the country.

People are increasingly unable to access and afford healthcare amid the growing shortages of medicines and medical supplies. Pharmacy shelves are empty, hospital stocks are nearly depleted and home medicine cabinets are bare."

As a result, hospitals are implementing what they term a "rationing strategy" as it pertains to meals served to patients in order to cover gaps of other vital supplies like oxygen. To help with this crisis, Mercy-USA launched a food assistance project for two major government hospitals as well as a COVID-19 isolation center. We supplied fresh produce and raw foodstuffs such as rice, bread, meat, chicken, dairy products and more for these hospitals to improve the quality and quantity of meals served three times a day to in-patients.



A Listening Ear and Skills to Help

Life in camps for displaced persons in Syria is chaotic, frightening and overwhelming for all who have been forced into this devastating situation. But for a parent of a small child, the lack of healthcare can end in the preventable death of a precious life.

Currently, over 2 million internally displaced Syrians are crammed into a small region of the country along the closed border with Turkey. Unemployment, skyrocketing food prices, and lack of access to medical facilities has made children vulnerable to malnutrition.

Mercy-USA for Aid and Development has teams of trained community health workers who travel into the camps and offer health screenings for malnutrition and other maladies. The teams are local Syrians who

are able to offer trusted advice on best practices on nutrition as well as other vital information to parents living in these difficult circumstances.

Prevention is the goal for our teams; a child found to be undernourished is only one bout of diarrhea away from losing too much weight and ending up with severe acute malnutrition requiring hospitalization and as such our teams work hard to catch the problem early enough to prevent disaster.

Mercy-USA also provides nutrition screenings for pregnant and lactating women. Mother's health and nutrition is equally important and we make sure an expecting or new mother has the support she needs to maintain her own health as she cares for her children.



Our integrated health and nutrition services are striving to help mothers and their young children to be strong and healthy despite the desperate conditions that they can't control.

Removing the Stigma from Disease in Somalia

Treating TB and HIV/AIDS with Gentle Concern and a Trusted Promise of Privacy

Nurse Safiya is one of Mercy-USA's longest serving healthcare practitioners in Somalia. Since she began working at the Mercy-USA TB and HIV/AIDS Health Center in 1994, she has treated and counseled more than 21,250 TB and HIV/AIDS patients. This clinic serves patients in Mogadishu with the generous support of the Global Fund and UNICEF. Mercy-USA also operates 13 more TB health clinics around Somalia.

When the clinic opened 27 years ago, the stigma surrounding TB was serious due to fear of contagion while HIV/AIDS carries its own stigmas. In Somalia, as in other developing nations, a diagnosis of either treatable disease could mean a loss of livelihood, community support and sometimes even a person's family life. Nurse Safiya and the healthcare staff at the clinic do intensive outreach to the community they serve to educate folks on the value of health screenings and testing at the first sign of disease before it has an opportunity to spread to neighbors and loved ones.

The Mercy-USA team has made great strides in this regard and while they know they must conduct continuous



awareness campaigns, patients are coming in for screening earlier to receive timely treatment.

Ilyas is 45 years old and the sole provider for his wife and nine children. His livelihood came from his small kiosk in the marketplace. Earlier this year, he began experiencing a persistent cough and lost a significant amount of weight. He visited clinics in his neighborhood but the diagnosis and treatment did nothing to alleviate his illness. His health deteriorated to the point he was bedridden and was forced to close his business. A friend had learned about the Mercy-USA special clinic for TB and HIV/AIDS and convinced Ilyas to go and get screened.

Ilyas received what he considered a death sentence of HIV from clinic staff. He was ready to leave the health facility immediately as he panicked, worrying over who would support his dear wife and children. The staff convinced him to stay and through gentle counseling, helped him understand with treatment he could regain his health, live safely with the disease and continue to provide for his family.



He entered the program and began treatment. In the few months since he began receiving care, his health has improved greatly. He visits the clinic monthly to receive his prescriptions and health counseling.

Ilyas has reopened his business and is back to supporting his family. "I thank the Mercy-USA healthcare staff for admitting me to the facility and supporting me in fighting this disease."

Nurse Safiya told us, "Whenever a patient comes in for testing, we ensure counseling is done before and after. Every service we offer is patient-centered and we always tell the truth about their status." Being honest and forthright with patients who are frightened and overwhelmed provides assurance that their disease can be treated successfully while leading them back to their previously productive lives.

Vaccines are rolling out..

"COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access", abbreviated as COVAX, is a worldwide initiative aimed at equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. The vaccines are rolling out to healthcare workers in locations run by Mercy-USA. Front-line healthcare workers, like Mercy-USA physicians and staff in Syria and Somalia received the vaccine.



In addition to healthcare workers, people who are most at risk like elderly Fadumo Ibrahim (below) in Mogadishu, Somalia have been receiving the COVAX vaccine as well.



Back to School During COVID-19

Public school returned to in-person learning this year in Detroit, MI and Mercy-USA was happy to again sponsor backpacks and school supplies. In addition, masks, hand sanitizer and more were distributed to needy kids to help mitigate COVID-19 spread. Many of these children's families are struggling mightily during the pandemic and Mercy-USA wanted to make coming back to school easy and safer. We also provided teachers in the classroom with PPE plus CDC recommended posters, a flyer for caregivers on resources for vaccination and safe practices as well as a coloring book to help kids learn how to stay healthy.

A teacher at one of the schools told us, "No matter how smart a child is, or no matter what skill level they're at, they have to be organized. That backpack really helped the students to see themselves as individual students, individual scholars." She went on to say that just having the supplies and organization tools we supplied in the backpacks helps her students stay on task and allows her to move through the learning day more efficiently. "I've seen students many times do an excellent job in terms of preparing their work assignments for the day. But then they don't have anything to stay organized. If they put it in their pocket, it's gone. I've got to start over with that student."

This feedback helps us understand that seemingly simple items like folders, scissors, pencil holders and a backpack are not always within reach for families struggling in urban areas with high levels of poverty. Giving a child a new and filled backpack provides for not only a positive feeling about school and learning but also that people outside their immediate community actually care about them and wish them success.

Mercy-USA replicates this program in Bosnia for needy elementary school students. The children are given similar backpacks stuffed with supplies that the school requires each student to bring to class.

We were thrilled to receive thank you letters (seen on the top right side of page 7) from the children in Bosnia thanking our donors for their backpacks.



Students from Tuzla, Bosnia received new backpacks with school supplies in September. Many students sent letters of appreciation.



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

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



Lebanon

Mobile Medical Clinic for Syrian Refugees and their hosts in Wadi Khalid
Major Surgery support for Palestinian Refugees
Neonatal support for Palestinian Refugees
Nutritional support for mothers and children
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
Shelter, blankets, mattresses, mats for displaced 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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