

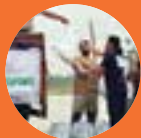


# Inside



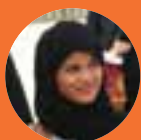
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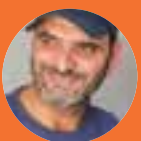
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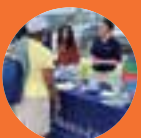
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# Mercy-USA News

September 2023 • Volume 29 Issue 2

## Water Projects in Somalia Protect More Than Health

In July, 2023, Mercy-USA completed four major water projects in Somaliland. In addition to building wells for villages and urban neighborhoods, we also take on larger water projects. We rehabilitated and retrofitted traditional “Berkad” water retention systems. They are a means to

safeguard and store water from annual rains for use throughout the dry season in Somalia and Ethiopia. If built correctly and maintained, each water retention system can serve the needs of several thousand or more people.

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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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Mogadishu, Somalia  
Antakya, Turkey



[mercycusa.org](http://mercycusa.org)



# Safe Water is More Than Clean Water



Berkad is a Somali word that means “underground water tank”. Traditionally, these tanks were dug to collect rainwater and often were set up to capture runoff from streams into a catch pond so mud and other particulates would settle before entering the berkad. However, these berkads, (about the size of a swimming pool), were uncovered, allowing for evaporation in the unrelenting sun and were susceptible to contamination.

A major reason for prioritizing this particular type of safe water project was that these uncovered berkads posed an extreme risk to children. In one of these villages alone, five children died fetching water. On the day our assessment team visited, members of the community were burying the fifth child to perish in recent times.

Through the generous support of our donors, we have done major repairs and improvement to four berkads in Somaliland. We cleaned and repaired the tanks themselves



*This previously derelict berkad in Qoolcadey, Somaliland was responsible for the death of five children. It was uncovered and the water was contaminated and deep enough for a young child to drown. Mercy-USA made major improvements to this berkad (feature photo above) that is now safely in use by the community.*

and then constructed sturdy metal roofing (that also allows for distillation of the water in the tank), built elevated storage tanks



and solar systems to power the new water pumps that serve the safe tap stations. We have formed and trained water management committees from each village so that these facilities are maintained to last for years.

These four new berkad systems are serving the clean, safe water needs of more than 10,000 people. In case of extreme drought, these communities can request water trucking and will be prioritized by

government or non-government agencies since the water given will be kept clean and safe for use for the duration.

Mercy-USA will continue to monitor the use and condition of each berkad. We will also provide ongoing training and support for each community.



Qamar and her husband raised ten children and are proud grandparents to 28 grandchildren. They’ve lived in their village in Somaliland for a very long time. Most of her children and all her grandchildren were born and raised in this community. Like most of their neighbors, Qamar’s family are farmers and raise livestock.

Years of unreliable rainy seasons have put a major stress on the community. “We lacked access to clean water for years. We had to travel six hours to source water and it was often contaminated. It couldn’t be filtered enough to keep the children from becoming sick. Even our tea made us sick.”

Mercy-USA rehabilitated a nearby berkad that serves more than 520 households. Qamar’s household alone is 40 people, so the impact of this clean water project is quite important to the lives of many people.

Qamar said, “Mercy-USA reached out to us and rehabilitated our



water system (berkad) and it has changed so many aspects of our daily living. In terms of health, the water is now covered keeping animals and pests out and the taps for drinking water are easy to use. Even watering our animals is possible by filling their pans

from the tap which keeps them from contaminating the water for us humans! This has changed so much for our community. We are very grateful to those who gave to Mercy-USA and made this possible for all of us here.”



# Cox's Bazar Struck by Fires, Then Monsoon Devastation



temporary shelters that offer little privacy and bring protection risks for women and girls. Basic services are also stretched to their limits in the camp network. Many Rohingya refugees are entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance.”

Bangladesh as a whole is ground zero for the negative effects of global climate change and is particularly vulnerable to flooding, cyclones and landslides. The country's most vulnerable population, the Rohingya refugees, have seen a terrible year thus far for disaster.

According to the United Nations' Population Fund, "Almost 1 million Rohingya refugees live in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh - the largest refugee camp in the world. Most arrived in 2017, fleeing persecution, widespread violence and human rights violations in Myanmar. Conditions in Cox's Bazar are difficult. Many of the Rohingya refugees live in tightly packed,



In March, 2023, a massive fire tore through two crowded camps in Cox's Bazar making 12,000 Rohingya refugees homeless. Mercy-USA was on the ground within hours to provide hot food and water to the survivors.

In July, 2023, monumental monsoon rains that fell over a week's time caused hillsides to collapse in Cox's Bazar killing several Rohingya refugees in their shelters. More lives were lost due to flooding. Thousands in the camp were made homeless due to mudslides and flooding. Mercy-USA arrived on the scene with a team of dedicated field staff and began delivering hot meals to victims of this catastrophe as well as an emergency food and supply kit that included shelf stable foods, clean water, a flashlight and more.

We distributed these vital supplies to families who lost what little they had before this natural disaster struck.



# Providing the Basics for Life in Yemen



## Yemen: The Worst Humanitarian Crisis in the World

According to the United Nations, "After nine years of war, Yemen remains the world's worst humanitarian crisis. An estimated 4.5 million people—14 percent of the population—are currently displaced, most of whom have been displaced multiple times over a number of years. Two-thirds of the population of Yemen—21.6 million people are in dire need of humanitarian assistance and protection services. The risk of a large-scale famine in the country has never been more acute. Tens of thousands are already living in famine-like conditions, with a staggering 6 million more just one step away from it."

Mercy-USA distributed 4,000 food baskets to families who have been internally displaced from their homes. We served families in the Marib, Taiz, Aden and Lahj regions where the need is dire.

In July, we trucked in 320,000 liters of water to an area in Taiz that was in severe need of clean drinking water.

During Ramadan and in observance of Eid al Adha we distributed food and fresh meat to thousands.



The gift of sight can never be taken for granted. In Yemen, the healthcare system is under tremendous strain and while cataracts severely limit a person's vision, it's not life threatening, making it a lower priority for care. To help restore vision and independence, Mercy-USA has provided free cataract surgeries for 220 people since July, 2023.





# Syrians Restart Their Lives with Just a Small Hand Up!

Mercy-USA has been providing modest grants to Syrians who have been displaced from their homes and businesses due to the on going war in Syria.

With generous support from the U.S. Agency for International Development's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), we've been able to provide cash grants to people who have begun a small business or lost an existing business to the war. This project aims to supply a small cash infusion into businesses with the ultimate goal of removing reliance on food aid. NW Syria is full of people who lost not only their homes and way of life but also their ability to earn a living. This project has made it possible for families to restart their lives with dignity and hope for the future.

## Tech Made Possible

Abo Omar is displaced from Homs. With his university degree in mechanical engineering he had his own tool and die business working as a machinist for more than 30 years. He and his family arrived in Idlib after fleeing Homs with just a few clothes and personal belongings. His business, workshop, and tools were left behind. In Idlib, he began working for others until he got an offer to rent a tool and die shop in exchange for a percentage of his earnings.



This stroke of luck provided his family a living, but without any leeway to expand or improve the business. He heard about the livelihood program through Mercy-USA and received a grant to purchase a 3D printer for his business. Now he's able to print parts needed by customers in a fraction of the time it takes to order and receive parts from vendors outside of Syria.

"Basically, I work on the design on the laptop to get the required measurements then I render the design and

ask the machine to print it. This will save us time and money. So instead of getting the pieces we need from abroad and waiting for it to come all the way here plus paying for the piece and the shipping cost, we can now make it here and save ourselves and our customers all that trouble. The 3D printer helps me improve my business, earn more money while helping my customers get what they need faster and for less!"

## Support for a True Artisan

Abo Mustafa learned the art of making and designing marble and stone mosaics almost 20 years ago in Jordan. He returned to Syria and began a business of making mosaic art for homes and businesses abroad. He had a staff of seven artisans working under him and he provided well for his family.



However, the war in Syria destroyed his livelihood,

his work product was stolen or destroyed. Additionally, he had difficulty in sourcing the materials and eventually the business collapsed as the war dragged on.

He and his family including his 6 children had to leave their home and find shelter in Idlib city where he scratched out a living as a driver. After receiving a grant through Mercy-USA, Abo Mustafa has been able to restart his mosaic business, albeit on a smaller scale, but he says, "it's a beginning! I hope that with hard work, I can make this business I love so much grow enough to support my family 100%!" Giving an artist the ability to create and sell their work is a reward in of itself.



## Returning a Chef to a Restaurant of His Own.

Before Abo Ibrahim was displaced from his small town in Hama eight years ago he had a small restaurant, serving the local favorite dishes of fava beans, chickpeas, and falafel. Displaced from his town more than once, he lost all his cooking implements and restaurant supplies as the family was forced to flee. He used all his savings just trying to keep his wife and four children on the move, seeking respite from the violence.

Abo Ibrahim began working in restaurants, cooking, cleaning and serving. Stoically, he dreamed of opening a place of his own, but restaurant workers don't earn much and even eight years of careful savings wasn't

enough for an establishment of his own.

When Abo Ibrahim learned about Mercy-USA's livelihood project, he began to believe his dreams could come true. He applied and was awarded the \$900 grant. "I had saved about \$700, which was not enough to open a restaurant, but the grant I received in addition to my savings allowed me to start my own business again."

Abo Ibrahim built the restaurant (above) from the ground up. He was able to construct the building on rented property, fit out the restaurant and order the stock needed to make and serve his delectable dishes. In this town where the family settled, there is only one other falafel restaurant with a strong demand.

"The project had a great impact on me and my family as well as an impact on the local community. The restaurant will provide a steady income for me to support my family as well as needed nutritious and fresh meals for the people living here. Thank you for giving me the ability to care for my family through the dignity of my own hard work. I wouldn't be able to start this business without your help".

Mercy-USA's longest and most fervent goal has been to provide opportunity to people so that they can rely on their own labor, ingenuity and determination to realize the dignity of independently earning and building a future for their families.



# Mercy-USA Sponsors Dream of Detroit Street Fair



Mercy-USA for Aid and Development is pleased to have partnered with Dream of Detroit for their successful 2023 Street Fair, featuring live performances, local businesses, and other community organizations.

Dream of Detroit, a local group committed to the idea of housing as a universal human right, has been working to develop sustainable strategies for providing housing to those in need in their community. By focusing on both land development and community organizing, Dream aims to challenge the deeply rooted systemic issues that have disproportionately affected Black residents and contributed to the decline of communities like theirs on the Westside of Detroit.

The Street Fair is a flagship event for Dream of Detroit and this was its return to the community since the COVID-19 pandemic. The fair brought people out and showcased the work being done by community organizations like Dream of Detroit with the goal of encouraging participation in improving the community.

The fair attracted at least 2,500 people and offered a wide range of activities and entertainment for individuals of all ages. Younger attendees enjoyed live



children's book readings, gaming, bounce houses, and face painting, creating a vibrant and enjoyable experience for the whole family.

There were also live performances from esteemed artists, ranging from the captivating spoken word presentations by Tariq Toure to the musical performances of Freeway and Ain't Afraid. The Street Fair also served as a platform to showcase the efforts



of other local organizations, including the HUDA Clinic and the HUDA Urban Garden, who are making significant contributions to the community.

Mercy-USA for Aid and Development had a significant presence at the fair. In addition to staff, Mercy-USA had a booth with volunteers signing up those interested in future volunteering. Additionally, Mercy-USA helped rally volunteers to help Dream of Detroit run the fair. Along with staff, our volunteers helped organizers with the set up and take down of the fair.

The 2023 Street Fair was a resounding success, bringing together individuals,

organizations, and businesses all working towards the common goal of creating a sustainable, inclusive, and equitable community in a part of Detroit that has been previously neglected. Mercy-USA hopes to be a reliable supporter of this community's rise toward vibrancy and success!





# Where We Work • [mercyusa.org](http://mercyusa.org)



## Albania

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



## Bangladesh & Rohingya Refugees

Emergency Relief  
Livelihood Support  
Seasonal food aid



## Bosnia and Herzegovina

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



## Ethiopia

Seasonal food aid  
Emergency Relief



## 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



## 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 Syrian Refugees  
Seasonal food aid



## Pakistan

Seasonal food aid  
Emergency Relief



## Somalia

Approximately 800 new or rehabilitated wells and other water resources 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  
Livelihood support



## United States

Seasonal food aid  
Support for refugees  
Support for Detroit area disadvantaged students  
Emergency Relief



## Turkey

Earthquake Relief and Recovery



## Yemen

Seasonal food aid  
Emergency Relief

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