A Sad Milestone: Mercy-USA Marks Another Winter Relief Effort in Syria

Since 2012, Mercy-USA has been working to alleviate the winter suffering of families in Northern Syria. In years past, we’ve distributed winter gear to children and heavy blankets to families suffering through the cold season. When Aleppo endured a horrendous upswing in barrel bombings in the winter of 2013/14, we even followed our families out to the camps along the Turkey border. They had sought shelter in tents in the mud and Mercy-USA distributed sleeping mattresses, mats, blankets and winter clothes to the children, including boots.

Last winter, we also gave mothers warm robes along with knitting wool for sweaters. Thousands of children were again given winter gear to stay warm.

Now, this year, we’re tackling the problem of the cold head-on by distributing stoves and delivering a biomass fuel that is sustainable and ecological to boot. See the next page for the full story.
On the southern tip of Turkey there’s a verdant valley named Altınözü. Among the rolling hills and olive trees as far as the eye can see, humanity and cooperation is heard in beautiful tones of Turkish and Arabic. This agricultural region is also home to a Syrian refugee camp sheltering more than thirteen hundred refugees from Syria who have been warmly welcomed by their Turkish neighbors when the conflict drove families from their homes. Even before the war in Syria, Arabic was spoken here making the transition easier for the refugees. We visited during olive harvesting time and witnessed the refugees help bring in the harvest as a means of surviving away from their own homes and farms in Syria. There’s also something relatively new happening in this largest olive growing region of Turkey, and Mercy-USA is happy to tell the story as it will benefit the families we help who have been left behind in Syria.

**Olive oil production and unintended potential harm to the environment**

The byproduct of olive oil production—a kind of a mash of skins and pits—has traditionally been put into sludge pits as waste. Because the waste is highly acidic and saline, it can potentially harm the environment, including the groundwater. We visited an olive oil plant in Altınözü where a new fuel, called Prina in Turkish is manufactured at the end of the olive oil production cycle. The olive oil waste is made into a cleaner-burning and more efficient fuel that is used in stoves instead of wood or coal.

**Prina Fuel, Stoves and a Warmer Winter for Syrians**

This fuel is becoming popular in Turkey because of its overall efficiency, and near net-zero ecological impact, but probably due to the war, this heating fuel was not utilized or known in Syria until now. After seeing the incidents of acute respiratory infections account for over half of the patient visits to our Aleppo clinic among infants and children under five this last year, we are installing stoves that will warm a family’s main sleeping room with this sustainable, eco-friendly fuel. We’ll be delivering four months’ supply of Prina so that babies and children will be warm through the coldest winter nights. We hope we can alleviate some of the misery and illness that has been plaguing families, especially children each winter since this crisis began, with the added benefit of introducing a better fuel to the community.

You can sponsor a heating unit and one month’s fuel for a family home in Aleppo for $185. A donation of $105 will provide a month’s worth of eco-friendly Prina fuel to heat one family home for a month.
Indonesian women support their families with a little help from Mercy-USA.

Mercy-USA began working in Indonesia to provide disaster relief after the devastating earthquake and tsunami off the west coast of Sumatra in December, 2004. We are proud to say that more than ten years later, Mercy-USA has a permanent office in Medan, Indonesia where we are offering continuing development assistance to improve the lives of many disadvantaged families.

Despite the richness of the land in Indonesia, millions of small farmers, agro-workers and fishermen are unable to tap into the opportunities available to them due to financial restrictions and lack of access to modern equipment and methods. Mercy-USA helps rural farmers increase their yields through better seed, and fertilizers plus the very important training in best farming practices.

We offer a helping hand to many poor, rural farmers, especially single mothers who struggle to make ends meet with multiple mouths to feed.

Kartini, at left, is a mother of five and with the help from Mercy-USA, her little farm with less an acre of seed planted yielded three tons of rice. That's more than she harvested in previous years as a result of a helping hand up from Mercy-USA. This extra profit from her harvest will allow her to pay her kids' tuition and still have enough to plant vegetables in between her rice harvests.
Orphans in Albania find opportunities through Mercy-USA English and computer training classes

Enxhi Tuzi, 12 years old, has been taking our English and computer training courses in Albania. For an orphan like Enxhi, having access to additional training courses will give her an advantage she couldn’t otherwise afford. These kids gain extra skills in computer software and English that will give them an edge for college or vocations as they enter adulthood. Mercy-USA has had hundreds of kids complete the courses that include motivational awards and gifts for dedication to learning.

An example of Mercy-USA small enterprise development success

Nazif Tivari, is an experienced engineer in milk processing and the owner of a milk processing plant in Durres village in Albania. After the collapse of communism, Nazif emigrated to Italy, where he worked and gained more experience in the milk processing industry. In 1996, he returned to Durres and purchased an old warehouse and converted it to a small milk processing plant. When he began work, he employed 2 workers and processed 100 liters of milk per day.

In 1997, Mercy-USA identified his business as worthy of support, enabling Nazif to expand the small processing plant into a thriving enterprise that currently employs 18 people and processes 5,000 liters of milk a day among other products and services. Nazif’s small business is a contributing part of the community, not only in terms of dairy production but also in terms of employment. He is also now a part-time lecturer at the Agro University in Kamez, Tirane. Nazif says, “We’ve grown over the years with the help from Mercy-USA.”
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
• Aid farmers and local communities with sustainable farming methods. Also assist farmers in forming cooperatives
• English and computer skills training for orphans

Kenya
• Nutritional support services for mothers and children

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- Barad Palestinian Refugee Camps
• Vocational training courses

Somalia
• To date over 400 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 and infant formula 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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Automatic Giving Program: A gift of your choice can be automatically deducted monthly from your bank account. Please call us toll-free at 800-556-3729 for details on how you can make an easy and sustaining gift.

Mercy-USA for Aid and Development