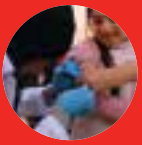




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Mercy-USA News

May 2019 • Volume 25 Issue 1

Lebanon Measles Outbreak Response

In March of 2019, The Ministry of Public Health in Lebanon declared a measles outbreak among children, including Syrian Refugees.

The surge in refugees since the war in Syria began has created

a significant strain on Lebanon's health system. Children are not being vaccinated against this disease, which can be deadly—especially for children under five. *Read more on page 2.*

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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Medan, Indonesia	Antakya, Turkey
Nairobi, Kenya	



Mercy-USA

Mercy-USA for Aid and Development

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Mercy-USA Fights Deadly Measles Outbreak in Lebanon

In coordination with the Lebanon Ministry of Health and UNICEF, Mercy-USA conducted an emergency vaccination campaign targeting regions of Lebanon where a measles outbreak was at serious risk of becoming an epidemic. The burgeoning Syrian Refugee population has put a strain on Lebanon's healthcare system and it's one of the causes for this outbreak.

We mobilized a medical team to cover areas found to have severe outbreaks in Lebanon where poverty and a lack of awareness has resulted in a great number of children not being vaccinated against measles, mumps and rubella plus other preventable diseases such as polio.

When families did not approach the mobile medical clinic, our teams set out on foot and went door to door checking with families on their children's vaccinations. In addition to receiving free vaccinations if needed, each family was helped to understand the importance of keeping children immunized on schedule and about the accessibility of Lebanon's immunization program. Our medical staff are local to the region and were able to reach out to parents about this subject without the stigma of being "outsiders". They were able to help parents understand how easy and important it is to keep their children safe from these deadly diseases.



Mercy-USA Healthcare Workers visited families door-to-door to inform families about the need for immunizations and the risk to their children's health if not vaccinated.



Polio vaccines were administered when it was discovered that a child had not been vaccinated.



Our medical teams walked on foot and knocked on doors throughout vulnerable neighborhoods with vaccines and public health information.



"Thanks for caring for our children as we do."

Eleven-year-old Mohammad is a Syrian refugee living in Lebanon with his family since 2013. Before the war in Syria, Mohammad's parents took pride in their modest home and ability to care for their children's health needs. Today, as refugees with little income, the family can't afford wellness visits to the doctor.

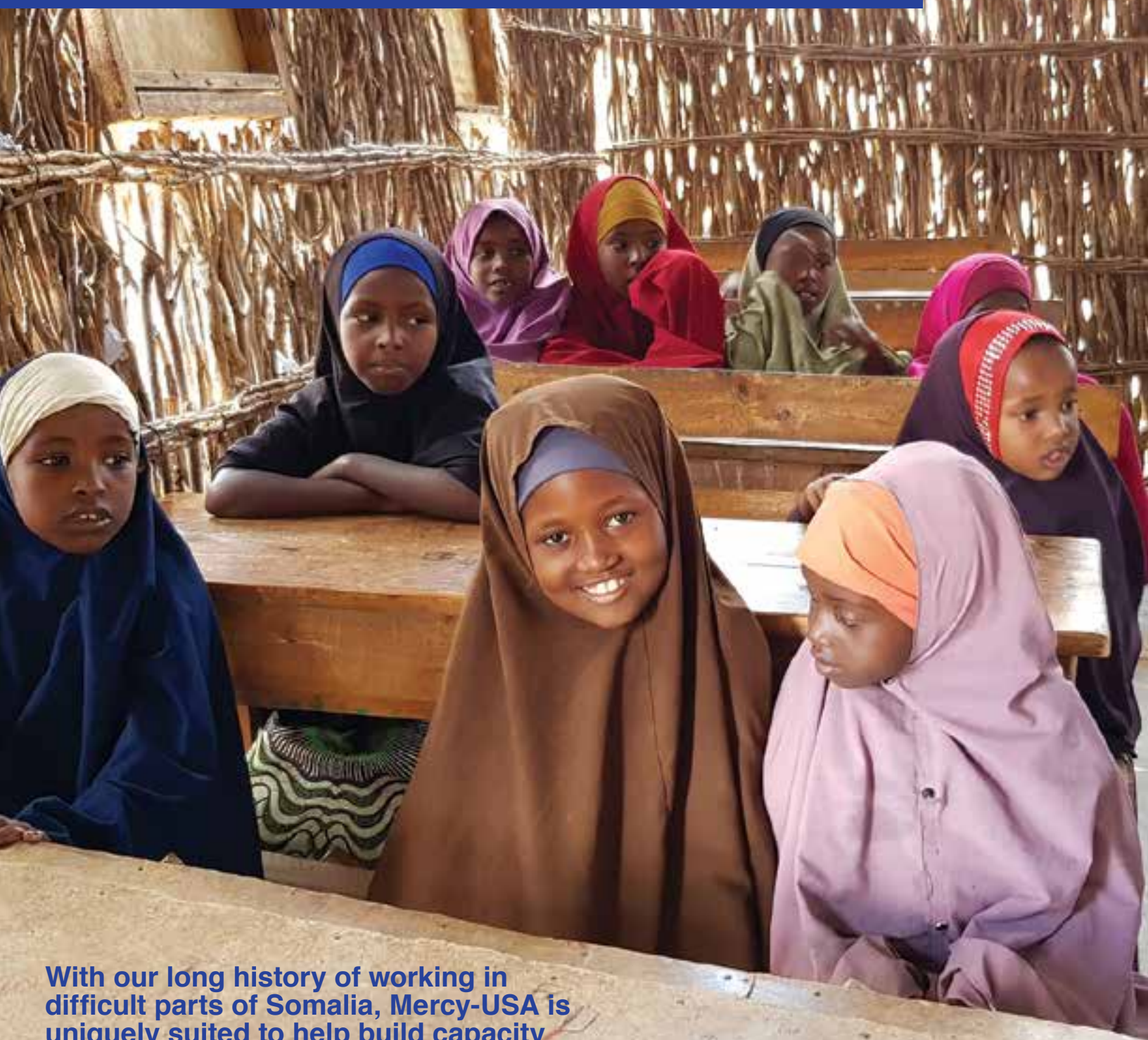
Mohammad was found lacking basic and essential immunization against a number of serious diseases. When the measles outbreak was announced his parents were terrified that he was extremely vulnerable to measles, mumps & rubella. They were keeping Mohammad indoors except to attend school, which of course left him exposed to the disease.

Mercy-USA sent a medical team directly to Muhammad's home to check his vaccination records and immunize him and his siblings with all vaccinations needed.



Relieved that this care was free of charge, his parents repeatedly thanked Mercy-USA medical staff, "Thank you for caring for our children the way we do."

Removing Barriers to Learning in Somalia



With our long history of working in difficult parts of Somalia, Mercy-USA is uniquely suited to help build capacity in communities hardest hit by years of unrest and natural disasters.

Mercy-USA for Aid and Development with the support of Educate a Child (EAC) and the government of Somalia began a comprehensive education project in Somalia last year to support thousands of students in some of the poorest parts of Somalia. We are facilitating teacher training to help build capacity among local teachers. Materials and curriculum are being distributed and implemented. We're offering specialized curriculum to students who are academically behind their peers due to a myriad of factors, allowing them to return to their appropriate grade level faster, without stigma.

We are also rehabilitating and expanding school buildings including adding new classrooms, providing new furniture, building latrines and hand washing stations to promote disease prevention. The private lavatories will provide girls with the needed privacy at school that they deserve as they grow up.

Since 1993, our field staff has been providing healthcare and other humanitarian services to their neighbors in these hard-to-access rural parts of Somalia. This makes

us successful in building capacity within the community for positive development with particular attention to girls' education. One of our primary goals is to increase enrollment among girls in each community and inspire them to strive for higher education.



Accelerated Learning Program Helps Students Who Had Been Forced by Circumstances to Curtail Their Education

In Somalia, herding livestock is one of the major sources of livelihood and requires families to move from one area to another in search of pasture. 14-year-old Abdirashid, (right) had previously attended school in Kahda district about five miles outside of Mogadishu; however, his attendance was not consistent as he had to take care of his family's livestock. He missed a great deal of school and he was eventually forced to drop out.

For many students like Abdirashid, access to school became even more difficult during the recent years of drought as families were forced to move further into rural areas where there are no schools. On several occasions Abdirashid tried to persuade his parents to allow him to remain behind to continue with his studies. "My parents needed my help in caring for our livestock and I could not convince them to allow me to continue my education," he said.

Six years of devastating droughts later, Abdirashid's family realized that the keeping of livestock will remain a continual struggle so they sent him back to Kahda district to stay with his aunt and resume his education.

While very happy to return to school, he felt upset about resuming learning at the 3rd grade level at the age of 14. Fortunately, his aunt learned about the free Accelerated Learning Program offered at Ainushamsi primary school. Under this program, children are given intensive courses for a year to recover lost schooling time.

Mercy-USA is currently running five Accelerated Learning programs in south central Somalia. Abdirashid is very happy to be studying alongside other kids his age without stigma or embarrassment. He told us, "my lost hope is rekindled with this program."



Abdirashid was able to return to his studies when his parents realized that their pastoral livelihood will remain a constant struggle and wanted him to have other options for success.



Abdullahi Ali, a teacher at Ainushamsi Primary and Secondary school teaching Arabic in Abdirashid's ALP class.

Mercy-USA Dramatically Increases Food Basket Distribution



Mercy-USA has been distributing vital monthly food baskets in Northern Syria for more than 6 years. We began our food distribution in Aleppo, serving the needs of poor families left behind in the city. In the last half of 2016, Aleppo was under siege and no aid shipments could get in. However, our forward thinking team strategically placed food stores inside the city before the last access road in was blocked. In the last weeks before the fall of Aleppo, Mercy-USA was the only organization with food stocks left to distribute.

We followed the evacuees out to

the surrounding countryside and have expanded our reach to tens of thousands as the need for food has only increased.

Because of our consistent and professional implementation of large food basket distributions over these years, we're pleased to announce our numbers of families served with nutritious food has now been increased more than 15 times. Through a generous grant and in partnership with the World Food Program, we have been able to scale up this project and serve more than 86,000 people in northern Syria every month.



A Mother's Story of Loss and Heartbreak...

The Alaboud family in southeastern Idlib province has been struggling to survive as their way of life has been destroyed by seven years of war. However, the lack of resources and opportunity doesn't hurt them as much as the loss of their oldest son, Mohammed, three years ago. Just 16, Mohammed was killed from an airstrike as he walked to school.

Surrounded by six of her younger children, Um Mohammed couldn't keep the tears at bay as she described how the loss of her oldest boy has affected the entire family.

"He used to work with his father after school in the market to help us survive when the economic situation became worse each day the war dragged on. He was my heart, always loving and caring toward me and all his younger siblings." The loss of her son is a weight that bears on Um Mohammed in visible ways.

It's clear that the war and the hardship it brings to the family makes mourning Mohammad's loss impossible to overcome. The family of 11 has an income of about \$50 a month which isn't enough to keep them from starving. Um Mohammad said the flour and other vital staples in the monthly distribution are a "treasure" for them.



Mercy-USA Helps Indonesian Village Rebuild



Above: the site of the village's kindergarten just after a devastating earthquake flattened virtually everything in the summer of 2018.

Below: the newly rebuilt and improved kindergarten buildings, including boys and girls washrooms, sinks and a playground.



The island of Lombok, Indonesia suffered five large earthquakes in late July into August of 2018. Hundreds of people were killed and villages were all but destroyed.

In the village of Kerta Raharja in North Lombok every single home was destroyed as well as all of the school buildings. Thankfully, the quakes did not strike while the children were in school, or the death-toll would have been far more devastating. Primarily farmers, residents of Kerta Raharja take great pride in the education of their children and with all the schools reduced to rubble, they were doubly devastated. Mercy-USA rebuilt a primary school with earthquake standards quickly so that the children are back in school and learning. The new and improved campus includes classrooms, a teacher's room, washroom facilities and a playground.

Additionally, we provided all the children with new school uniforms, backpacks, lunch kits, books and supplies.

Better access to education plays an important role in reducing the need for humanitarian assistance. That's why Mercy-USA strives to support schools and education programs around the world.



Shelters built for the most vulnerable in Kerta Raharja.

After five devastating earthquakes last summer, virtually everyone in the humble village of Kerta Raharja lost their home. Many of the community members were unable to rebuild even a simple shelter to stay

safe from the elements. Mercy-USA's generous donors helped us build shelters for the village's most needy residents. The semi-permanent shelters have a solid foundation and electricity.

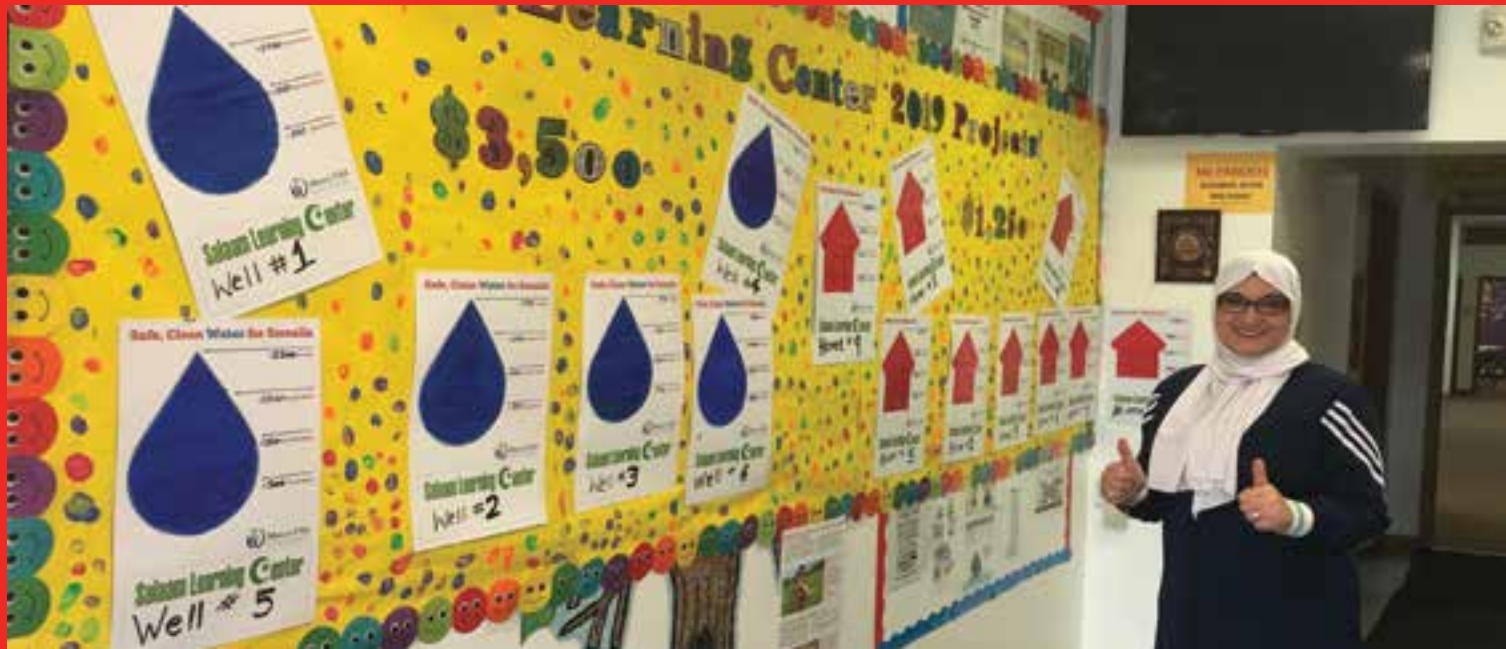


Inak, (at left in red) is a widowed mother of four. When her husband died seven years ago, she struggled financially but managed on casual farm work to keep her children in school. When the earthquake flattened their home and destroyed everything in it, three of her four children were still pursuing their education. Without a home, Inak had to use the tuition money she had saved to purchase a tent. Three of her children had to drop out of school. Mercy-USA built the family a semi-permanent home and we're happy to say her children have been able to return to school and are catching up on the time lost by studying extra hours at night since they now have electricity.

"I'm so happy with this home, it saved us from living through the rainy season in an inadequate tent. It was like a dream come true."



Salaam Learning Center is a Fundraising Powerhouse



Mrs. Hanan Eassa, Principal of Salaam Learning Center in Tinley Park, IL (photo above), chose to feature two of our projects for their annual school-wide fundraising/service project.

The children who attend Mrs. Eassa's school raised over \$32,000 in order to provide nine families shelters in Indonesia (story featured on page 9), plus six wells in Somalia. We provided the students with donation envelopes and progress posters and they did the rest. The students range in age from 3 to 13. This is the second time Mercy-USA has been honored by Salaam Learning Center's annual fundraising project, and we're amazed at the absolute dedication of these children, their families and friends in helping others less fortunate.

If you're interested in participating in one of our fundraising projects designed for schools and youth groups, email us at info@mercysusa.org and we may feature your school or group in a future newsletter.



Every thumb print on Salaam Learning Center's giant fundraising wall represented a donation toward a shelter home in Indonesia or a well for a community in Somalia. As the weeks progressed, more colorful dots appeared and completed progress posters filled the space beyond everyone's expectations. Mrs. Eassa told us that she always does careful research before choosing a charity to feature at the school's annual project, and Mercy-USA is once again honored her school community put their trust in our work.

Mercy-USA Volunteers Help Detroit Neighbors in Need

Mercy-USA's second annual Urban Warmth project was a success for not only the folks in need in Detroit but for the volunteers who were given a chance to help their neighbors during the winter when it's hardest to manage with homelessness and poverty.

Over one weekend in early February, Mercy-USA staff and volunteers-young and old-worked in four locations that included homeless shelters and soup kitchens distributing items that are often in short supply by February. Items such as blankets, winter socks, gloves and hygiene items, including diapers were distributed to those in need.

"Aisha J. Morrell-Ferguson, Chief Development Officer at Coalition on Temporary Shelter, COTS told us, "I like to call this time of year 'the forgotten season'. During the holidays, we have a lot of wonderful donations and supplies come into our shelter. Unfortunately, as we go further into the winter, and further away from the holidays, we see less and less contributions. This is especially challenging because the harsh winter takes a toll on the little

supplies our guests have left to keep them warm."

It was difficult to see who benefited the most over this weekend of brotherly love, the volunteers or those they sought to help.



Bahati, (above) had moved into COTS shelter with her two young boys three months before we met her during the Urban Warmth Project day. She had been working hard to move into more permanent housing and told us she was hopeful she'd have a place within a week or two of our meeting. Bahati's warmth and optimism during a tough time was uplifting. "Everyone has been so helpful to me and my boys. I am especially grateful for the warm blankets because sometimes the heating doesn't work properly and it can get really cold at night."



She'll take the blankets to her new home and will remember the kindness of the volunteers and Mercy-USA donors as she gets back on her feet and settles her family into a more positive situation.



Mercy-USA earns Charity Navigator 4-Star Rating for 9th year in a row, outperforming most charities in America.

We are proud to announce Mercy-USA for Aid and Development has earned its ninth consecutive Charity Navigator 4-star rating. This is the highest possible rating and indicates that we adhere to sector best practices and execute our mission in a financially efficient way. According to Charity Navigator, "Only 2% of the charities Charity Navigator evaluates have received at least 9 consecutive 4-star evaluations. This exceptional designation from Charity Navigator sets Mercy-USA for Aid and Development apart from its peers and demonstrates to the public its trustworthiness."

Where We Work • mercyusa.org



Albania

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



Pakistan

Building a primary school in Sindh Province of Pakistan



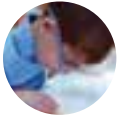
Bosnia and Herzegovina

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



Rohingya Refugees

Food baskets for Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh



The Gaza Strip

Supporting special school for blind and visually-impaired elementary school-aged children



Somalia

To date about 600 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
Building food security through veterinary services for livestock.
Support for primary & middle schools in 5 regions of Somalia.



India

Seasonal food aid



Indonesia

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



Syria

Monthly food baskets for thousands of vulnerable families in northern Syria
Winterization projects for vulnerable children and their families
Shelter, blankets, mattresses, mats for displaced families
Medical services for vulnerable Syrians living in hard-to-reach areas



Kenya

Nutritional support for mothers and children
Hygiene and sanitation training and promotion



Lebanon

Syrian Refugee assistance in Wadi Khalid, Lebanon
Palestinian Refugee Assistance in Beddawi and Nahr-Al-Bared Palestinian Refugee Camps
Vocational training courses



United States

Seasonal food aid
Support for Refugees
Local support for Detroit area homeless shelters
School backpack program for disadvantaged students

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I give my permission to Mercy-USA/Mercy-USA (Canada) to withdraw from my Credit Card the amount I have indicated above. I also understand that I may change or end a monthly donation agreement at any time with a written notice.

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