



GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST DEPARTMENT OF ECUMENICAL RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

ASSISTANCE TO THE AFFECTED IN THE SYRIAN CONFLICT OPERATIONS UPDATE 2

COVERING THROUGH JULY 2012

DERD has chosen the parable of Good Samaritan as its logo because it reflects the concept of service to all without any discrimination and this service is based on loving our neighbor as ourselves.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Over 35,000 humanitarian aid items have been delivered; serving an estimated 140,000 individuals**
- **38 families (174 individuals) are benefiting from with rent assistance**
- **An estimated 1.5 million people are in need of assistance**

Background

The United Nations now estimates that 1.5 million people are directly impacted by the current crisis. The Syrian Federation of Trade Unions estimates that 3 million people have lost their jobs, but this figure is likely to be much more. To respond to their needs the UN and non-government organizations have appealed for US\$193 million under the Syria Regional Response Plan, which is currently only 33 percent funded.

In Syria, it is estimated that 1 in 20 Syrians are displaced, roughly 1.5 million people. The majority of the displaced have no jobs or sources of income. Many families live highly compacted in small apartments. The current and most pressing needs in Syria are for assistance with healthcare, food, and rent, in addition to hygiene parcels, infant supplies, and bedding sets. Families in Syria are simply running out of resources for daily living as the chaos from the war continues to engulf the country.

Outreach/Response

Distribution:

Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced in the last few weeks of July. Many



DERD distributes humanitarian kits throughout Syria, especially in hard hit regions such as Homs.

families that have fled the recent violence are now residing in Damascus; relocating to schools and public facilities throughout the city. Over 60 schools in Damascus have been identified to be housing thousands of displaced Syrians. With limited resources, DERD has been able to deliver nearly 600 hygiene kits to families housed in schools throughout Damascus.

Below is a table indicating DERD's humanitarian aid distributions since the beginning of the response. Much more can be done and much more needs to be done.

Table of Total Distributions

	Clothing	Food Items	Mattresses	Bedding Sets	Infant Kits	Hygiene Kits	Kitchen Sets
Al-Hasakeh						600	
Damascus	399			336	265	2177	13
Damascus Suburbs		100		185	405	1,745	245
Hama				61	44	261	
Homs	300	2,400	850	1,638	3,165	16,624	571
Latakia				30	11	209	25
Swaida				50	32	158	44
Tartous				250	265	1,915	130
Total	699	2,500	850	2,550	4,187	23,689	1,028

Remedial Classes:

Most displaced children have experienced considerable disruptions in their education, both within Syria and during their subsequent displacement. UNICEF estimates that half of all displaced Syrians are children. It is essential to provide tuition support and remedial classes to allow the children to resume their studies and catch up to grade level. DERD has provided 50 children with essential remedial classes.

Rent Assistance:

Many unemployed and displaced families struggle to provide food for their children, and are not able to pay their rent. DERD has been able to provide rent assistance for 174 individuals. The rent assistance helps alleviate the burdens facing so many families, and allows them to focus resources on other necessities.

Health and Nutrition:

On July 4th 2012, DERD conducted the first health and nutrition training on "Nutrition in Emergencies." The lecture lasted for 120 minutes, and all the 43 participants during this lecture were displaced Syrians from Homs.

Topics discussed included the benefits of breastfeeding for both mothers and infants, the disadvantages of artificial milk, the healthiest foods and drinks for babies 6 months of age, and breastfeeding positions and latching, amongst other topics.

Since July 4, 32 lectures have been conducted in different areas of Syria: Aleppo (2), Hassakeh (3), Damascus (7), Homs suburbs (10), Homs (2), Hama (3), Qamishli (3), Raqqa (1), and Tartous (1). A total of 1,080 people attended the lectures, of which 82% were women.

A woman from Homs who attended one of the "Breastfeeding in Emergencies" lectures in Damascus during the second week of July noted that, "I learned information that I never knew before. I am a first-time mother with an eight-month-old baby boy, and this lecture was extremely helpful. This will help me make healthier choices for my baby."

Twenty-one doctors were trained to conduct the health and nutrition lectures. They will target displaced people and other health care workers with their lectures. Five doctors will be giving lectures in Homs and its suburbs, 1 in Tartous, 1 in Hama, 2 in Aleppo, 1 in Raqqa, 1 in Qamishli, 1 in Hassakeh, and 9 in Damascus and its suburbs.



Breastfeeding lecture in Damascus

Psychosocial Support:

The first psychosocial sessions started on July 1, 2012 in Damascus. To date, 6 sessions have been held for 169 people. For the adult participants, the lectures and workshops include topics on challenges facing the family, ways to express needs, and setting priorities; stress and its impact on human beings; problem-solving strategies and resolving problems through proper steps and communication; how to defuse violent behavior and thoughts; strategies for parents dealing with their children in crisis; and sharing of experiences through peer groups.

The children's sessions include mental health evaluations by trained social workers, games, sports, arts and crafts, singing, and music. The sessions bring children together in secure and protected environments to build integration, interaction, communication, and confidence/trust building. These activities will have a lasting positive impact on their lives.

One participant of the sessions for adults was a man who had been living in Georgia, until he received word that his only son was killed in Homs during the violence. He returned to Syria days later not only to attend the funeral of his son, but also to find his neighborhood turned into rubble. This man was emotionally at his breaking point. Bringing him to be with his peers, who are also suffering through similar circumstances, was the "best thing you could have done" he said. By the evening of the second day, his participation in the psychosocial support sessions alleviated some of the emotional trauma he was experiencing. Through these sessions, his spirits were uplifted, he shared an emotional bond with other families that were experiencing similar hardships, and his emotional needs were identified.



Participants in a psychosocial support session for adults in Sahnaya are labeling what is most important to have in life.



A woman who participated had a similar story - she lost both of her sons to the violence in Homs. Since her home was also destroyed, she left to go live with family in Damascus. It is hard to imagine the impact that losing one's children to conflict can have on a person. During the introduction in the first morning of the psychosocial session, this woman was crying and wishing things to return to the way they had been. After days of participating in the psychosocial sessions, the woman displayed signs of emotional healing and was able to engage stimulating activities such as dancing with one instructor. The woman's facial expressions changed throughout the sessions into a more positive and uplifting manner. During the third day, she was smiling and dancing with one of the instructors. This woman is not cured, but she does have new hope for the future. DERD has witnessed that bringing people together through these psychosocial sessions, giving them the outlet to express themselves, in a safe environment, with caring people around them, and showing them ways to handle stress, together have tremendous impacts on the emotional well-being of people who have lost so much.



Displaced children play games and meet with trained therapists as part of the psychosocial program.

A woman from Homs, now living in Damascus, who recently received a clothing voucher from DERD told staff, “I am a new bride, and unfortunately I had to leave my lovely new home in Hamidiyeh, Homs five months ago and come to Damascus, where I was received warmly. I heard that DERD was distributing clothing, and since I left Homs with almost nothing, I decided to go register my name. I used the clothing voucher and bought five items, for my husband and myself. I admired the way the sellers dealt with me. They were gentle and understanding of my situation. I felt happy and safe for the first time in a long time. Thank you, they are really doing so much for my husband and me.”

Emerging Needs:

The surprise bomb assassination of four Syrian government officials caught many people off guard. Syrians that thought they were living in relatively secure areas were not prepared for the clashes between armed rebels and government forces that quickly ensued since the bombing. Thousands of people left their homes and are now residing in public buildings.

DERD monitors are regular visiting the schools to conduct rapid needs assessments. The families are requesting food, bedding, hygiene and infant care items, and many are requesting underwear. Neighborhood residents, especially near schools in wealthier areas of Damascus, pooled their resources together and delivered bed sheets, clothing, and food to the newly displaced Syrians.

With the help of God, and your support, we can reach these families in need and provide them with life-giving care. Our resources are limited and we appeal to our Diaspora, friends, and partners to continue to assist the people of Syria.

Yours,

Samer Laham
Director of DERD