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Photo courtesy of Win McNamara/Getty Images via Flickr/FreedomHouse

Millions of Syrians have been displaced by the brutal civil war that has ravaged the country.

Stepping Up Our Support for Displaced Syrians

When the civil war in Syria broke out four years ago, creating a massive refugee crisis, Episcopal Relief & Development stepped up to the plate, working with our longtime partner — the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf — to provide vital support for children with disabilities at the Zaatari refugee camp just over the border in Jordan.

In the years since, the crisis has grown even more horrific due to the rise of ISIS and continued violent oppression by the Assad regime. Since the war's outbreak, more than 200,000 people have been killed, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Nearly 4 million people have fled Syria since the start of the conflict, and another 7.6 million Syrians have been internally displaced within the country,

bringing the total number forced to flee their homes to more than 11 million — half of the country's pre-crisis population.

As the crisis has escalated, so too has Episcopal Relief & Development's response. Most recently, we have partnered with the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches — of which the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem is a member — to assist internally displaced people.

Right now the emphasis is on helping communities in relatively safe areas that become beacons for those who have been driven from their homes by bombings, terrorism and other violence. One such region, the coastal Tartous Governorate in western

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President's Column:

Flexibility and Resolve



One of the hallmarks of Episcopal Relief & Development's 75 years is our unique blend of flexibility and resolve. We are single-mindedly devoted to our mission of healing a hurting world, while always adapting our strategies and tactics to the realities on the ground in the communities we serve. I believe this is the ideal combination for success.

After all, while all people want a roof over their heads, a reliable supply of nutritious food and clean water, access to quality health care and the opportunity to be financially independent and improve their lives, there are many different ways to achieve these goals. Every country, community and individual is unique. What works for one may not work for another.

As you'll read in this issue of Seek & Serve, our flexibility in pursuit of the goal of better maternal and child health has enabled Episcopal Relief & Development to provide mothers with essential information empowering themselves to protect their families from disease in the most effective possible way. In Kenya, that means forming Mother2Mother groups in key communities, while in Ghana it means convening community celebrations called "durbars." Both approaches are working.

In Syria, our efforts to address the horrific humanitarian crisis resulting from the brutal, chaotic civil war started with helping refugees who fled to Jordan, but are now evolving to assist internally displaced people who are overwhelming the few remaining safe areas in this devastated country. As this shows, our ability to respond swiftly and nimbly to changing conditions is vitally important — one aided greatly by the presence of our partners who provide a preexisting infrastructure and first-hand knowledge of what people and communities most need.

I am not normally in the habit of quoting Chinese Communist leaders, but as a China scholar before I joined Episcopal Relief & Development, it seems to me that the late Deng Xiaoping's quote is quite apt: "It doesn't matter if a cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice." We are goal-driven but wide open to the best way of getting there, especially when those we serve are involved in the planning and execution of our work.

Speaking of achieving goals, we are close to reaching the \$7.5 million fundraising target for our 75th Anniversary Campaign. But as the year nears its end, we are not there yet. I deeply hope you will consider joining the Campaign — or adding to what you have already invested — so that we may bolster our work promoting health, alleviating hunger and creating economic opportunities.

With a new Presiding Bishop, the United Nations updating its Millennium Development Goals and Episcopal Relief & Development entering our 76th year of existence, this is a time of hope and of sowing seeds for the future. A time to renew our Baptismal Covenant to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves. Please join us as we start to write the history of Episcopal Relief & Development's next 75 years.



Yours faithfully,

Robert W. Radtke
President

Combined Federal Campaign

If you're a federal employee or retiree who participates in the Combined Federal Campaign, you can designate Episcopal Relief & Development as the recipient of your donation. To make a gift in 2015, just designate your gift to CFC #80416 by December 15th. (In some cases the listed charity will be Global Impact, our umbrella organization, which then allocates a portion of the gift to Episcopal Relief & Development.) For more information on the CFC, visit www.omp.gov/CFC/.





Children in Zambia learning about good health while having fun.

Improving Child & Maternal Health in Africa

Knowledge is power. That's the driving principle behind three major Episcopal Relief & Development projects in Africa designed to improve maternal and child health.

In Ghana, Kenya and Zambia — as in most of the rest of sub-Saharan Africa — malaria, pneumonia and chronic diarrhea are the leading causes of illness and death among children. Other challenges range from the basics like securing a nutritious diet to the more daunting like living with HIV and AIDS. For all of these issues, the more information and training mothers have, the more they will be able to prevent disease and ensure good health for themselves and their children.

As a result, Episcopal Relief & Development has partnered with the Anglican Diocese Development and Relief Organization in Ghana, the Anglican Church of Kenya Development Services-Nyanza and the Zambia Anglican Council to launch comprehensive child and maternal health initiatives that are already achieving promising results.

In Kenya, for example, Mother2Mother groups are being formed in communities throughout Nyanza province in the far western part of the country. These groups are comprised of mothers living with HIV and offer support, encouragement and information they can use to provide for their own well-being and the healthy development of their children.

The Mother2Mother groups hold regular meetings, which are led by a community health worker or mentor mother, and involve information-sharing and discussion on a selected topic. Subjects include how to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV during pregnancy, childbirth and infancy, breastfeeding, infant and young child feeding, vegetable gardening, nutrition to keep children and mothers healthy and HIV treatment compliance.

The impact so far has been powerful. In one community last year, 42 out of 44 babies remained HIV negative, and 25 mothers “graduated,” meaning their children were still HIV negative after 18 months. The Mother2Mother group held a

public graduation ceremony that helped raise awareness and reduce stigma in the community.

In Ghana, partner staff and community health workers are convening “durbars” — community events and celebrations with music and dance, traditionally involving chiefs and elders — which convey health messages and promote social acceptance of new health practices.

For example, one durbar focused on the care of children with malaria symptoms. After an introduction that highlighted key malaria messages, a role-play drama was enacted by community health workers demonstrating how they use Rapid Diagnostic Tests to determine whether a child has malaria and the best course of treatment.

The key to their success is that a durbar is joyous and serious, celebratory and informative all at the same time. They can have an eye-opening impact on attendees, who learn valuable information while bonding with community members. The approach speaks to the wisdom of something that's at the core of everything Episcopal Relief & Development does — following local traditions, being steeped in local culture and having programs designed, implemented and driven by people on the ground that are based on empowerment.

The maternal and child health programs are focused on achieving three primary goals. First, to provide information to mothers that helps them properly care for their children and know when to seek medical help for malaria, diarrhea and pneumonia. Second, to increase early childhood parenting knowledge and skills in households affected by HIV/AIDS, focusing on the development of children from birth through age six. And third, to make quality health care more accessible and available to mothers, children and their families in rural areas.

While there is much work to be done, each of these efforts is making important, life-saving progress.

Stepping Up Our Support for Displaced Syrians

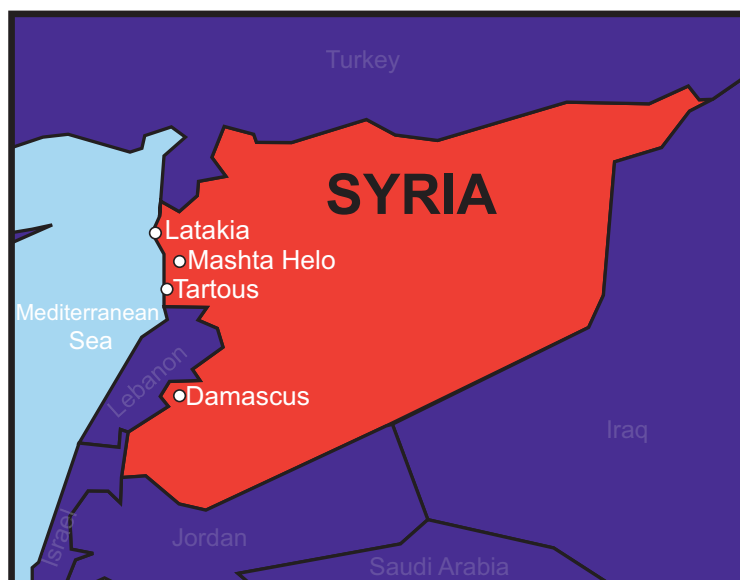
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Syria, is currently home to over 200,000 displaced people. As the conflict continues to escalate, these communities are struggling to absorb the influx of people looking for shelter. Very little housing is available and the costs have skyrocketed, leaving the newly displaced to take residence in schools, unfinished buildings and other outdoor spaces.

To address these critical and rapidly growing needs, Episcopal Relief & Development is supporting efforts to provide cash aid to help displaced individuals and families access safe and adequate shelter. Cash is the most practical form of assistance considering current circumstances. To ensure security and accountability, our partners on the ground work closely with local clergy to distribute these funds for rent and fuel.

Because we're tapping into church infrastructure covering almost all of the governorates in Syria, there is already a large volunteer network of church youth and local coordinators serving in various logistical roles in the target areas. That network is key when trying to reach people in the midst of growing chaos and is what allows us to provide those in need with cash aid and, when possible, items such as food, fuel, heaters, kitchen utensils and bedding.

The need for this aid is exacerbated by the economic devastation that has accompanied the conflict. Unemployment rates are now as high as 85 percent in some areas and family savings have been depleted, leaving many to rely on assistance from local churches and humanitarian agencies. Many of the displaced in Syria lack the resources to leave the country and are unable to provide for their families.



Through our partners, we are supporting Syrians who have fled to the relative calm of the western towns of Tartous, Latakia and Mashta Helo.

According to the U.N., four in every five Syrians now live in poverty.

With no resolution to the civil war in sight, the need for Episcopal Relief & Development and our community to do more will only grow. Members of the Episcopal Church in the U.S. are encouraged to pray for the people of Syria — including the minority Christian population, which faces additional threats — and to support efforts to alleviate the suffering of those left without homes or even hometowns.

A Very Special Gift

Every year, parishes across the country find creative and inspiring ways to support *Gifts for Life*. And as two enthusiastic members of All Saints' Church in Vista, CA proved, you're never too young to show your love for people in need.

Five-year-old Blanca Camacho and her three-year-old sister Annia saw pictures of animals and children in last year's *Gifts for Life* catalog and decided they wanted to send a goat to children in Africa.

To earn the money, they asked their friends in the congregation to chip in. With the help of their mother and grandmother, they created a poster to hang in the parish hall during Advent, designed t-shirts to wear during church and distributed small handouts to the parishioners.

Anyone who donated to their project received a handwritten thank you note, complete with a list of local goat milk cheeses compiled by their Aunt Kiki, a local cheese monger—to connect people personally to the benefits of having a goat.

With the help of the members of All Saints', Blanca and Annia raised enough for two goats and even a pig—and they want to do the same next year! It's the beginning of a tradition that is shaping their young view of the world, while helping families in need thrive. To learn more about how you can support *Gifts for Life*, visit www.episcopalrelief.org/gifts.



Blanca and Annia Camacho are proof that with generosity comes joy.