



THE NEXT STEP

NEWS FOR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS

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www.handicap-international.us

Bringing hope to Syrians

NEWS

“The first class had just started when a plane bombed the school,” recalls Sondos, an eight-year-old girl from Ghouta, a suburb of Syria’s capital city of Damascus. “We used to dream of going to school.”

The bombs broke her grandfather’s hand and arm. “I ran to see him, and my leg was hurt,” she says. “My mother was also hurt. I thought she lost her eyes. My sister was in pain and had blood dripping from her legs.”

Sondos is among the more than 1 million people injured in the six-year-old Syrian conflict. Like 5 million others, she and her family escaped their war-torn country. They’ve called Lebanon home since September 2016. “Here, we don’t have any planes in the sky,” she says.

The conflict has reached unimaginable levels of brutality. At the center of this violence is the use of explosive weapons in populated areas—a practice that has disastrous consequences for civilians, especially those for whom aid is out of reach.

“Ninety percent of the victims of explosive weapons are civilians, and when used in populated areas, the weapons kill and cause severe suffering and injures,” explains Mélanie Broquet, Handicap International’s project monitoring and coordination manager for Syria.

Since the launch of operations in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, Handicap International donors have provided more than 86,000 rehabilitation sessions. More than 9,000 people have received artificial limbs or braces. Nearly 20,300 people, like Sondos, have benefitted from psychosocial support. Your gifts have taught nearly 400,000 people how to spot, avoid, and report the landmines, cluster munitions, and other explosive devices that torment communities after conflict.

“The Syrian crisis is a humanitarian catastrophe of unprecedented scale,” explains Florence Daunis, Handicap International’s director of operations and technical resources.

Since 2011, more than 400,000 Syrians have died, and 6.3 million remain displaced from their homes, seeking shelter elsewhere within Syria. Among them, 13.5 million people need humanitarian assistance.

“Helping people in and out of Syria is extremely difficult as they are constantly on the move,” Daunis adds. “We’re committed to helping, as it goes hand-in-hand with our core mission, but we have to adapt the way we work due to the changing environment.”

“In this fight, the international community is missing, but Handicap International is there. It’s your support that allows us to bring aid to the people who truly need it.”

Meet Sondos and other Syrian beneficiaries: bit.ly/YouTubeHI



Thanks to you, Sondos (left), 8, and other children receive psychosocial support through art therapy. Injured in Syria, Sondos now lives in Lebanon.

YOUR RESPONSE TO THE SYRIAN CRISIS



500+
Handicap International staff



848 000
beneficiaries helped



4
countries of intervention (Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan)



20
mobile teams

One emergency to another: Nepal to Iraq

Pushpak Newar has dedicated a decade of his occupational therapy career to Handicap International. Instrumental in our emergency response to the 2015 Nepal earthquake, he joined colleagues in Iraq in 2016, to coordinate rehabilitation. He recently reflected on the two emergencies:

A natural disaster caused Nepal’s emergency, and people got back on their feet fairly quickly; they had no one to blame. In Iraq, we’re dealing with a chronic, man-made crisis. You can feel the anxiety, fear, and frustration when you talk to our beneficiaries. They find it hard to be optimistic. That’s not something I had come across before.

In Nepal, I think of Nirmala and Khendo, girls who had their legs amputated after the earthquake. Because Handicap International provided them

with appropriate care and follow-up within hours of their amputations, they were fitted with new legs and on their feet soon.

The Iraq conflict almost killed a similar-aged child from Mosul. He couldn’t get rapid and proper care, so his leg was amputated. He’s still in a critical condition and lives in an area that’s almost impossible to access. I’ve lost count of Iraqi children in the same situation.

In both kinds of emergencies, fractures, spinal cord injuries, amputations, and head injuries are the norm. However, in Iraq, people are injured while fleeing, and often have an amputation following a lack of post-operative care... and serious complications.

We give them hope. Physical therapy helps prevent disabilities or injuries from

getting worse, but most of all it reminds our beneficiaries that their accident does not mean life is over. I find hope in small victories. That’s what keeps me working.



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Meralia Simon, 90, receives aid from Handicap International at a shelter following Hurricane Matthew.

Note from the Executive Director



As this newsletter goes to print, I am in Medellin, Colombia discussing the important work Handicap International is doing in the region. I'm excited to share several stories on page 3 about the challenging, but critical, demining operations that are underway here.

As we prepared this issue, I was struck by the contrast between the hopeful direction our work is taking in Colombia and the tragic nature of our continued work with Syrians and Iraqis displaced by conflict. I'm proud of my colleagues working in both contexts and so grateful for your support of these life-changing efforts.

I hope that one day soon we will have only good news coming out of our Syrian crisis program. Until then, I know you stand with us in bringing comfort to the suffering.

If you are on social media, I hope you'll follow our work there. I'm especially excited about our new Instagram account. We take pride in sharing stories and photos of hope – all of it made possible through your gifts.

Jeff Meer
Executive Director
Twitter: @Jeff_HIUS

Your impact in Haiti

Support continues for Haitians recovering from Hurricane Matthew

PROJECT UPDATE

On October 4, Haiti was hit by Hurricane Matthew, which churned over the Caribbean nation as a Category 4 storm. The results were catastrophic, leaving more than 1,000 Haitians dead, and affecting more than 2.1 million people. Handicap International donors sprang into action, and channeled generosity that provided 1,000 emergency kits packed with tools to rebuild homes,

as well as household items such as solar-powered lamps, jerry cans for water, and mosquito nets. Your gifts helped 4,700 Haitians.

Hurricane Matthew caused the most damage in the country's harder-to-reach, south-east area of Jacmel. In fact, the lack of rapid access to Jacmel was the biggest hurdle to the international NGOs that responded. Our teams, including logistics experts, forged new paths to

transport more than 270 tons of humanitarian equipment to people living in the region, and cleared more than 2,800 tons of debris that piled up in drains and blocked roads.

In the meantime, our rehabilitation and psychosocial teams took great care to attend to the bodies and minds of the Haitians injured by the storm. More than 150 people have benefited from rehabilitation sessions, and approximately 200 received professional

psychological support and social cohesion sessions.

Thanks to you, especially our *First Responders*, or monthly donors, we were able to launch into action immediately, and rest assured that we could continue our emergency response. Your gifts ensure that no one is left on the sidelines, especially people with disabilities, those with chronic conditions, and older people.

Djamila: Standing tall in Thailand



THE BIG PICTURE

Finding Djamila →

In June 2015, four-year-old Djamila's life changed. Handicap International teams were searching the Mae La refugee camp in Thailand for people with disabilities who needed help when they heard about her case and tracked her down. Born with spina bifida, with paralysis in her lower limbs, Djamila could not walk. Thanks to you, she received braces and physical therapy, allowing her to stand tall.



A sister's hope →

Sahida takes her role seriously as big sister. She accompanies Djamila to her rehabilitation sessions with Handicap International and supports her as she walks. "I know the road is long, but I hope that she will one day walk to school like the other children her age," Sahida explains.



First of many ↑

Because of your support, Djamila's family recently watched as she took her first steps. As she grows, Djamila will need newly adapted braces, but for now she's mobile and can look forward to an active future on her own two feet.



A woman trains to do demining work in Colombia.

Colombia: Making her land safe



NEWS

When Handicap International deminer Marta Quintero was 14, she stumbled on a landmine as she walked through her village. Unlike many, Marta was fortunate. “It was so damp, the mine didn’t go off,” she says. “I saw people maimed by mines when I was growing up. I saw children die for a war that wasn’t theirs. Like many people, violence had a big impact on us.”

Ravaged by 50 years of armed conflict, Colombia is one of the world’s most densely mined countries with landmines and explosive remnants of war contaminating 31 of Colombia’s 32 regions. Since 1990, the use of improvised explosive devices has become systematic, generating more than 11,300 casualties.

But a new peace agreement between the government and Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) paved the way for a solution to this scourge of explosive weapons. In May 2016, the Colombian government granted Handicap International full authorization—one of two humanitarian organizations

Mines and explosive remnants of war liter 31 of Colombia's 32 regions.



with this status—to conduct mine clearance operations, assigning our deminers to three of the country’s regions. Our five-year mine clearance operation has a specific focus on indigenous land in the regions of Cauca, Meta, and Caquetá.

Today, Marta Quintero is doing something about the weapons. As Handicap International’s mine clearance operations manager in Meta, she’s the expert keeping her community safe. “I really love my work. I can’t tell you how great it feels when I finish clearing a contaminated area.”

Marta is not the only woman engaged in mine clearance operations. Handicap International ensures that at least 40% of deminers in Colombia are female—reflecting the high proportion of women in the country—and provides advancement opportunities to all.

The majority of deminers trained by Handicap International are from the indigenous communities where teams will conduct mine clearance. They are well aware of cultural sensitivities and can play a role in the process of restoring peace within their own villages.

Marta and her team hope to prevent the onset of disabilities, restore peace, and promote economic development within their country.

The U.S. Department of State’s Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement recently granted \$2.6 million to Handicap International to demine in Colombia.

From landmine victim to athlete

BENEFICIARY STORY

Wheelchairs and artificial legs rest by the side of the pool at an outdoor aquatics complex in Medellín, Colombia. One of the legs belongs to Flavio, 33, a Handicap International beneficiary. In 2000, he was working in a field when he stepped on a landmine. He lost his left leg. Several years after his accident, Flavio

moved to Medellín seeking better care for his leg, and met Handicap International.

“I was using a makeshift leg that was held together with band aids and tape,” says Flavio. “I got my current leg from Handicap International. It is finally a proper leg that allows me to be completely mobile. I can drive a motorcycle, and get around on my own. It changed my entire life.”

Because of support from donors

like you, the rehabilitation sessions Flavio performed with Handicap International also had an unexpected life-altering impact. His physical therapist, Yanrieth, encouraged Flavio to start swimming as a part of his recovery.

He hasn’t stopped since. “I consider myself lucky to have discovered swimming. The water cures me. The pool is the best psychologist I could ever imagine.”

Up for the challenge



Aderito Ismael

Handicap International’s head of demining operations in Colombia; former head of demining in Mozambique

Colombia is mountainous. Demining here is complicated. In rural areas, many routes are inaccessible, or even non-existent.

Sometimes, journeys have to be made on foot or horseback, taking several hours. Ideally, we would like to work with demining equipment and dogs, which would considerably speed up operations. However, as things stand, the steepness of the land means that using such heavy machinery would be impossible. We have to adapt to a situation that makes mine clearance more complex than in other countries.

Another complication is the kinds of mines we encounter. Many armed groups produced their own improvised devices, which do not always contain metal, hampering demining and detection.

Despite these obstacles, the team is ready to adapt. We’ve been providing indigenous communities with risk education on mines and explosive remnants of war for years. We look forward to clearing the land, and giving it back to the people.

Background

Geography

Located in South America with territories in Central America, Colombia is truly transcontinental. Its capital city is Bogotá and it is bordered by Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Brazil, and Panama. The country contains the Andes Mountains and the Amazon Rainforest.

History

Colombia has been seriously affected by armed violence, the result of a conflict that began in the mid-1960s. In November 2016, the Colombian government and FARC signed a peace deal, raising hopes that the war is finally over.

Mandate

Working in Colombia since 1998, Handicap International promotes the full participation in society of people with disabilities, including victims of armed conflict and their families. Handicap International also works to ensure that disability issues are taken into account in public policies.



Flavio enjoys a swim without his artificial leg.

Part of a sustainable effort

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

A mutual love of travel and a commitment to service brought Gina Febraro and Ajay Kapoor together in 2006. Giving to international organizations is one of many values they share, and it's a critical component of how they are raising their six-year-old daughter, Priya, to be globally conscious. "We're very committed to serving people who face different challenges from us, and don't have the same opportunities or access," says Febraro.

In April 2015, when the earthquake struck Nepal, they made their first gift to Handicap International, a decision that wasn't made lightly. "We did a lot of research before donating," says Kapoor. "Gina has a background in public health and has been involved in making grants to organizations, so effectiveness is important to us."

After ten years administering state and federal funding for maternal and child health programs in Colorado, Febraro has come to appreciate what makes effective programs and strong organizations. "We try to be very thoughtful about what makes organizations sustainable and who we are giving to so our gift makes as much of a direct impact as possible," she says.



Ajay Kapoor, Gina Febraro, and their daughter, Priya, traveling in Mexico.

Kapoor, who runs a small technology firm in Colorado, believes hiring local people provides a better return on investment, and was pleased to learn that Handicap International hires local physical therapists and service providers. "More people receive benefits from every dollar spent when locals are providing the service. It has a multiplying effect, which makes more sense to me."

But it wasn't just the data that led them to choose Handicap International. "The stories are really impressive," says Kapoor. In fact, reports about Handicap International's many beneficiaries are one of the biggest reasons why Kapoor and Febraro continue their leadership support.

"The moment I felt like we were going to have a longer-term commitment to Handicap International was months after the earthquake, when we received a letter and a summary of the services provided," Kapoor recalls. "The number of people impacted was awesome to see, but grounding that data in the individual stories was so important."

"I love the way the stories are told over time," adds Febraro. "It's very powerful." In particular, it was meaningful to follow the progress made by Nirmala, a little girl around the same age as their own daughter, who lost her leg in the earthquake. The family followed Nirmala's story as she received physical therapy, graduated to a prosthetic leg, and re-learned how to walk, hop, and run. Today, Nirmala is thriving at school.

Looking to the future, Kapoor and Febraro say they'll continue their support of Handicap International. "The dollars are going to places that are close to our hearts," says Kapoor.

"And if the organization can depend on consistent sources of funding over time, it can make even more of an impact," Febraro adds. "HI is an important investment that is making a difference, and we want to be part of a sustainable effort."



Thanks to our donors, Nirmala stands tall in Nepal.



Handicap International's website has the most up-to-date news, plus photos and videos of the people your donations help.

Sign up for regular e-newsletters:
www.handicap-international.us/join

Follow your impact:



We're real people and we'd love to hear from you!
 Touch base any time with comments, questions, or suggestions.

ReachOut@handicap-international.us
 + 1 (301) 891-2138

Laughing to make a difference in Syria

In January, Improbable Comedy organized a benefit comedy show called *All for Aleppo*. Hosted at a local venue, the event attracted nearly 100 people, and raised \$1,200 for Handicap International. The show's lineup of comedians included Mostafavi (pictured below), Jason Weems, and other regulars in the DC area comedy circuit.



A local Syrian refugee baked ma'amouls, a traditional Middle Eastern cookie, for the event. We recently baked them (they're delicious!) and hope you will too.

Make your own ma'amouls

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees

Dough

1. Add 1/2 tsp. dry active yeast to 1/2 cup of lukewarm water, mix lightly to dissolve; set aside for 3-5 minutes
2. Mix 3 cups cream of wheat, 3/4 cup flour, 1/2 tsp. salt, 3 Tbsp. sugar, and 1 cup (2 sticks) of softened butter
3. Add yeast/water mixture and 1/3 cup of whole milk to the bowl; stir until dough forms; let dough rest for 10 minutes

Date filling

1. In a food processor, combine 3 cups of dates, 1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg, 1/4 tsp. ground cardamom, 1 Tbsp. orange zest, and about 1-2 Tbsp. vegetable oil; blend until smooth
2. Roll date mixture into small balls (approx. 1 tsp.) and set aside

Shaping the cookies

1. Using your hands, flatten a small section of dough and place a date ball in the center of it, wrap dough around date, and press into desired shape (use a cookie mold or simply shape by hand); use a fork to press a design into the top
2. Bake on nonstick baking sheet for 12-18 minutes or until golden brown



THANK YOU!