

ZAKATNEWS

2016

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The Leader in Empowering Lives Through Zakat



MISSION

Zakat Foundation of America (ZF) is an international charity organization that helps generous and caring people reach out to those in need. ZF transforms charitable giving into actions that alleviate the immediate suffering of poor communities and build long-term development projects to foster individual and community growth worldwide.



VISION

ZF believes that those whom God has granted wealth must cleanse that wealth through charity, and those whom God has tried with loss must be provided a rightful share from the resources of the affluent.



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The Foundation Empowering Lives Through Zakat

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SOCIAL NETWORK

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Letter from the **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Assalamu Alaykum, dear brothers, sisters, and friends,

Our beloved Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: *“Verily, Allah loves that, when any one of you does a job, he should perfect it”* (Al-Bayhaqi). It is with this very sentiment at heart that Zakat Foundation of America (ZF) set out on its humanitarian mission 15 years ago.

As part of this journey, ZF has dedicated itself to making the most of your zakat and sadaqa to help the most vulnerable around the world. As one considers the uniqueness of how ZF has implemented its humanitarian efforts during even just the past year, a true precedent for an innovative approach to empowerment emerges. From supporting the establishment of the Rohingya Cultural Center in Chicago to create the first safe space of its kind for the Rohingya refugee



community all the way to building the ZF Unity Center at its own headquarters to provide a platform for educational discourse and awareness, ZF has left no stone unturned when it comes to serving our community at home.

Still, where ZF shines the most is in the strides it has made to alleviate the suffering of and to empower those facing the greatest suffering in the international realm. One such example is **the Zahraa University in Gaziantep, Turkey – a university in exile, run by refugees for refugees**. A pinnacle of higher education in the midst of war, the Zahraa University provides education and employment to its Syrian refugee students, staff, and professors, and is a coveted ray of hope for the youth who had considered all to be lost upon fleeing the conflict in Syria.

ZF’s dedicated efforts have been commended by the likes of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey who has shared his respect for organizations like ZF that mobilize the American Muslim community to make a positive difference in the world. Through a group led by US Senators Mr. Lindsey Graham and Mr. David Perdue has come a sincere acknowledgement of ZF’s service projects in aiding the Syrian refugee population. And, thanks to our dear friend, Dr. Larycia Hawkins, who traveled overseas to visit such ZF projects, a renewed light has been shone on the ZF-run educational institutes that are setting up a brighter future for Syrian refugees.

But the presence of ZF goes beyond its service activities. **For 15 years and counting, ZF has been here as a trusted source of information for donors and non-donors alike on topics relating to zakat.** To this day, ZF stands ready to answer all from the basic to the most complex of questions.

Hence, ZF is on a continual journey to serve all those in need, whether it comes to a warm meal and clean water for survival or to the necessary religious knowledge in fulfilling our obligations to Our Lord (swt).

My friends, as you read through the material that follows, please take a moment to say a prayer for all those we serve and for all those who help make these efforts a possibility. Please know that we are grateful to you, our donors, for trusting and walking with us through this journey. And please consider donating to ensure the ZF mission continues with excellence for years to come.

Peace be upon you,

Khalil Demir

Khalil Demir

Executive Director

Warming Hearts from **CHICAGO TO SYRIA**

Against the backdrop of the East European countryside, thousands marched through the rain, mud, and snow. Refugees from all corners of the world - Syria, Afghanistan, and Ethiopia - battled the frigid temperatures and bone-chilling winds. Their light jackets were far too thin to keep out the cold, no gloves covered their blistered hands, and their worn out shoes were useless against the snowy path.

This was the reality for the countless refugees traveling to Europe to seek a better life for their families. Last year, Zakat Foundation of America (ZF) mobilized aid for the refugee crisis on the borders of Europe. At the refugee camps, ZF aid workers distributed brand new coats, gloves, scarves, and boots. Warm meals were provided, the first in weeks for many of the refugees.

ZF understands winter relief is also needed locally as much as internationally. That's why the organization also organized winter relief programs in Chicago's disadvantaged neighborhoods. In late 2015, ZF sponsored a winter coat distribution in alliance with Jesse Jackson's Rainbow PUSH Coalition at their headquarters in the Hyde Park neighborhood, distributing over 100 coats, hats, and scarves to those most in need.

«This kind of generosity is really good, it's like paying it forward,” said Crystal Overton, an aide for the Representative Danny Davis of Illinois’ 7th Congressional District. “Many of us have been in need before, and as for any organization that steps up to the plate and helps: I love them. They should be congratulated and given kudos.»



 Donate a winter kit today to help those in need during the cold winter season at **ZAKAT.org**.

SEASONAL PROGRAMS

RAMADAN

EID DISTRIBUTIONS UPLIFT SPIRITS WORLDWIDE

“Is there any reward for good other than good?”
Qur'an 55:60

Ramadan is the holiest month of the year for Muslims around the world. It's a time of devotion, spiritual development, and giving back to those in need. This Ramadan, our gracious donors once again touched the lives of the less fortunate around the world.

OVER 700,000 PEOPLE IN OVER 40 COUNTRIES RECEIVED RAMADAN FOOD PACKAGES

EID GIFTS WERE DISTRIBUTED TO **OVER 1,000 ORPHANS**



ZF's Ramadan efforts would not have been possible without the support of our generous donors. May Allah (swt) accept these sincere efforts, and shower you and your loved ones with even more rewards. Ameen.

“The feeling on the ground is like a miracle...Many NGOs have come around that have not been able to reach the ground like Zakat Foundation of America.”

Brother Anas, Uganda



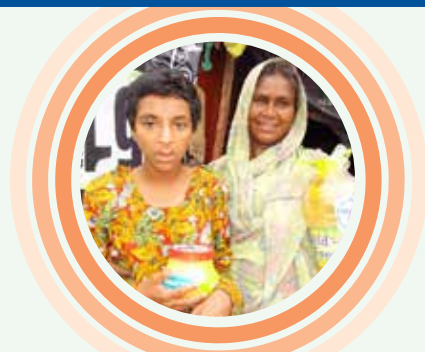
“Now I will not worry about food for two months. I can prepare a good meal and I will celebrate this Eid as a special Eid. I thank the donors with all my heart and sincerely pray for them. I will never forget this help. May Allah bless you abundantly.”

Bibi Jaan, India



“This food package will last me two months. I’m so happy that now I can celebrate this festive month. I am very grateful to the donors, thank you so much for sending me this food. May Allah bless you and your families... On behalf of all Muslim refugees living in Balapur camp that received a Ramadan package from you, I would like to say a big thank you to Zakat Foundation of America (ZF).”

Anwara Begum, Rohingya refugee, India



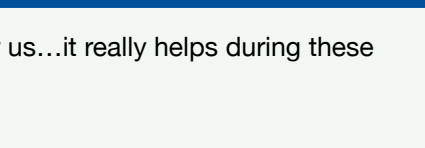
“It’s the month of Ramadan and I wanted my kids to experience the act of serving the less fortunate in this blessed month.”

Bilal Aydoner, an organizer of ZF’s Fasting for Humanity event in Chicago



“Getting this food package right now is such a great gift for us...it really helps during these tough times.”

Brother Ayman, Gaza, Palestine



SEASONAL PROGRAMS

UDHIYA/QURBANI

a little goes a **SACRIFICE LONG WAY**

“Neither their meat nor their blood will reach God, but what reaches Him is your piety.” (Qur’an 22:37)

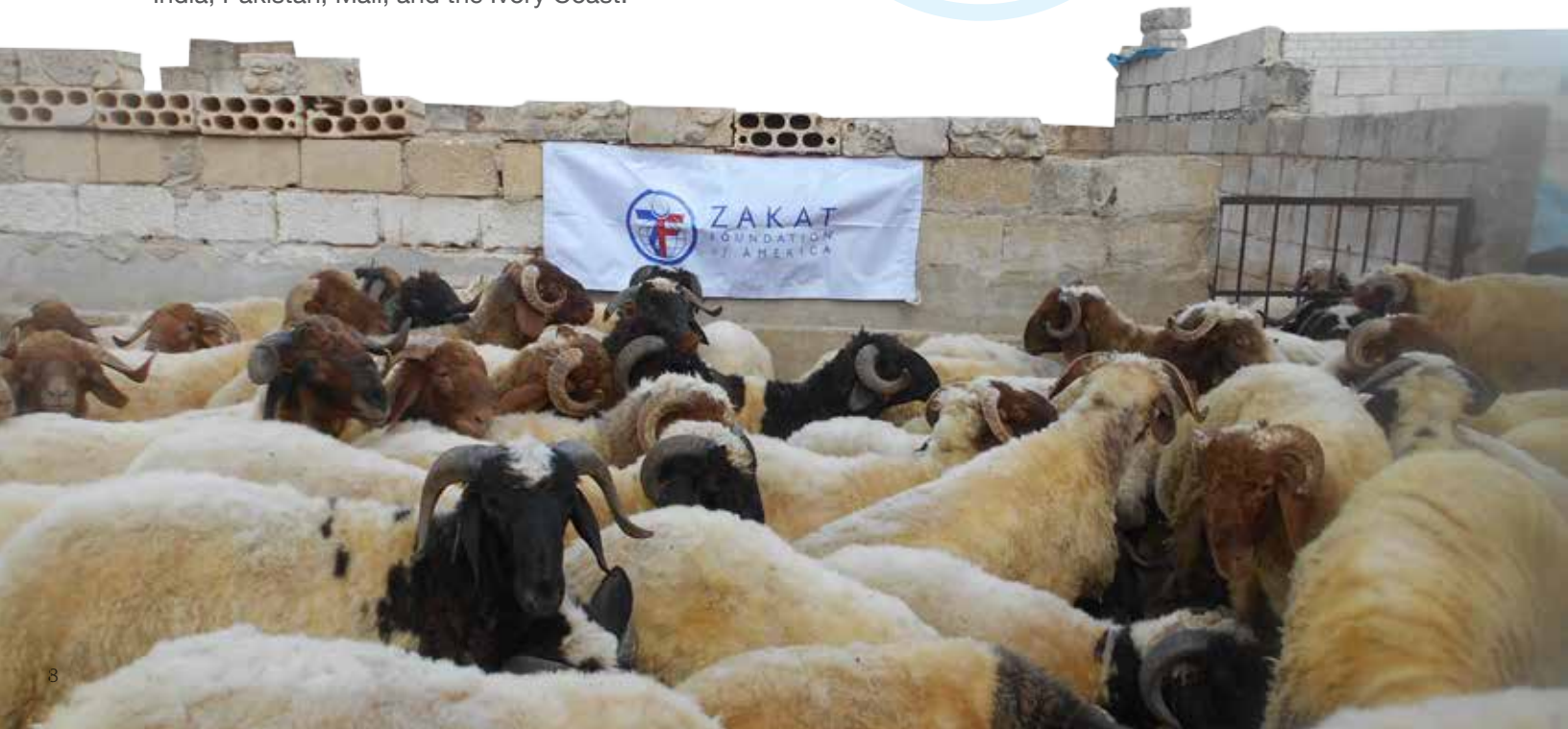
This year again, in line with its tradition, ZF served as a trusted bridge between the hand that gives and the hand that is in need of such an act of pious generosity. Through your generous Udhiya/Qurbani donations, even more families across the world were able to enjoy nourishing, fresh meat during the blessed time of Eid-ul-Adha.

By spreading the joy of Eid to those around the world who normally go without it, we can brighten the lives of tens of thousands of people and show, through our actions, the kind of world we aspire to create.

Khalil Demir, ZF Executive Director

**OVER 25,000 FAMILIES REACHED
ACROSS 40 COUNTRIES**

EID GIFTS were distributed to orphans in dozens of countries, including Syria, Turkey, Jordan, Palestine, India, Pakistan, Mali, and the Ivory Coast.





142,000 +
Damaged
Homes

400 +
Businesses
Destroyed

108,000 +
People Left
Homeless

2,000 +
People Killed

REBUILD GAZA

ONE HOME AT A TIME

Gaza is still waiting. Since the conflict of 2014, thousands of families remain without adequate shelter.

In response to the widespread damage, Zakat Foundation of America (ZF) launched the Rebuild Gaza campaign, a multi-phase project to repair or rebuild destroyed homes in the besieged Strip. ZF is partnering with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to impact at least 500 families within the first phase.

“

I cannot describe my feeling. My children had a room full of toys here. Now they are sleeping on the sand. The suffering is indescribable. Whether old or young, during the attacks, no human's sanctity was protected.

”

Mahmoud, ZF beneficiary in Gaza

HOPE LIVES!

KINDNESS WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN.

SUPPORT GAZA! BUILD A HOME!



Ahmed Mustaghfar's family was preparing the suhoor meal in the early morning hours when missiles began dropping on his neighborhood in Gaza.

"After hearing the sound of the missile, we carried our kids and ran away to the streets looking for a safe place," he says. "We had to evacuate the place for a whole day, and when we returned we were terrified to see that the house beside our house fell on our house, demolishing it...Everything was destroyed."



Thus far, ZF's generous donors have supported nearly 300 families with this project. Hope lives and kindness will not be forgotten. Support Gaza and build a home. Learn more about the Rebuild Gaza project and donate today at www.ZAKAT.org.



EMPOWERING A GENERATION OF **SYRIAN YOUTH THROUGH EDUCATION**

Zakat Foundation of America (ZF) understands the importance of an education on a child's upbringing and has invested greatly in educational programs for Syrian refugees and IDPs (internally displaced people).

2.6M+

SYRIAN REFUGEES
IN TURKEY

3M+

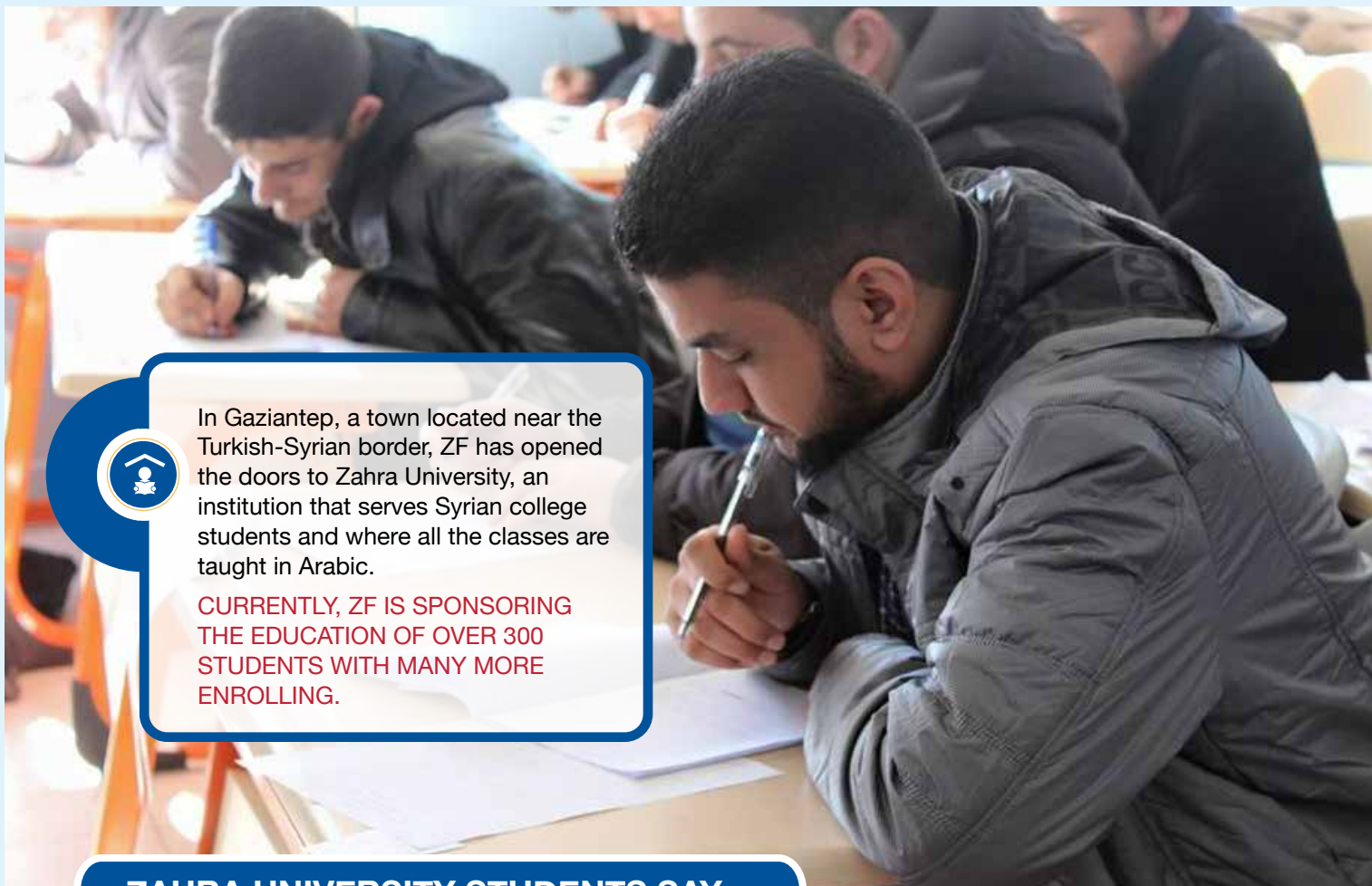
SCHOOL-AGED
SYRIAN REFUGEE
CHILDREN

2.7M+

CHILDREN OUT OF
SCHOOL



ZF sponsors 9 schools in Syria and Turkey where over 5,000 Syrian youth receive education and school supplies, including uniforms, backpacks, and learning tools.



In Gaziantep, a town located near the Turkish-Syrian border, ZF has opened the doors to Zahra University, an institution that serves Syrian college students and where all the classes are taught in Arabic.

CURRENTLY, ZF IS SPONSORING THE EDUCATION OF OVER 300 STUDENTS WITH MANY MORE ENROLLING.

ZAHRA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS SAY:

“In Syria, I wouldn’t get this opportunity to study because of the war. I believe good days are waiting for me as well as for my country.”

Diana, Syrian refugee student at Zahra University

“Zahra University helped me survive and stay positive.”

Abdullah, Syrian refugee student at Zahra University





MUHAMMAD ALI SAFE HOUSE:

A NEW HOME FOR SYRIAN REFUGEE FAMILIES

Earlier this year, Mr. Khalil Demir, Executive Director of Zakat Foundation of America (ZF), was receiving a delegation of politicians and artists, including U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and musician Bono, in Gaziantep, Turkey when he received a call. The colleague on the other line informed Mr. Demir that some of the Syrian orphans were being taken to the hospital. The children, who were forced to live in unsanitary conditions, had been bit by rats. Something needed to be done.

ZF immediately began looking for a safe space for the orphans and single mothers, many of whom were sponsored by the organization. They settled on a new building that was partially donated by the owners. The facility features over 40 fully-furnished rooms reserved for Syrian orphans and their mothers. Currently, over 44 families are hosted in the safe house, providing shelter to over 200 individuals. The building was named after Muhammad Ali, the iconic Muslim-American and legendary boxer who was renowned for his humanitarian work.

In addition, the safe house includes a Vocational Training Center (VTC) where the mothers can enroll in courses such as sewing, knitting, and related in-demand skill sets. Many local businesses in Gaziantep are ready to employ these beneficiaries. The Muhammad Ali Safe House also includes other multi-purpose rooms, including a health clinic where beneficiaries will receive medical and dental treatment from a team of Syrian and Turkish doctors.

The Muhammad Ali Safe House is a fundamental institution in a city struggling to keep up with the growing refugee population. The facility and its services are a dream come true for the mothers who wish a safe and prosperous future for their children. ZF is committed to developing programs to help Syrian refugees, such as providing education to over 5,000 Syrian refugee children.





ROHINGYA CULTURAL CENTER A FOUNDATION FOR A POSITIVE FUTURE

"This is my future, a new life. We can say, 'We are [like] a new baby, born here.'" - Nasir, a Rohingya refugee community leader representing the Rohingya Culture Center (RCC) in Chicago

For decades, the Rohingya Muslims have faced persecution, discrimination, torture, and violence in Myanmar (Burma). Despite the struggles, the Rohingya community remain resilient to preserve their faith and culture, even as refugees in their new home in the United States.

This past spring, ZF was involved in the opening of the Rohingya Culture Center (RCC) - the first Rohingya refugee center of its kind in the US.

"I have never had the feeling that someone is like, 'Oh, you are the refugee,'" said Nasir, one of nearly 1,000 Rohingya refugees who have resettled in Chicago in the past few years. "This is my future, my new life. We can say, 'We are [like] a new baby, born here.'"

When asked about the opportunities having such a culture center opens up for his people, Nasir explained, "This is [the] time to do something for our people: learn and get an education. And we want to show something to our people in Burma. We are here. We are learning for you."

Then he had a message for all Americans: "Muslims, non-Muslims, everyone is welcome in the Center. We need help, and we can help you. If you want to help us, we can help our people."

Learn more about the RCC and how you can support Rohingya refugees in the U.S. and abroad at www.zakat.org.



❖ MEDICAL SUPPORT

MEDICAL CLINIC OPENS IN TURKEY FOR REFUGEE PATIENTS

As long as the conflict continues in Syria, more refugees will seek refuge in neighboring Turkey. In response to the increasing needs of Syrian refugees, Zakat Foundation of America (ZF) has opened a new health clinic focusing on medical treatment for refugee patients.

The clinic, based in the Hatay province, includes a medical staff composed of doctors, specialists, psychiatrists, and teachers who will be assisting the clinic's 300 registered patients.

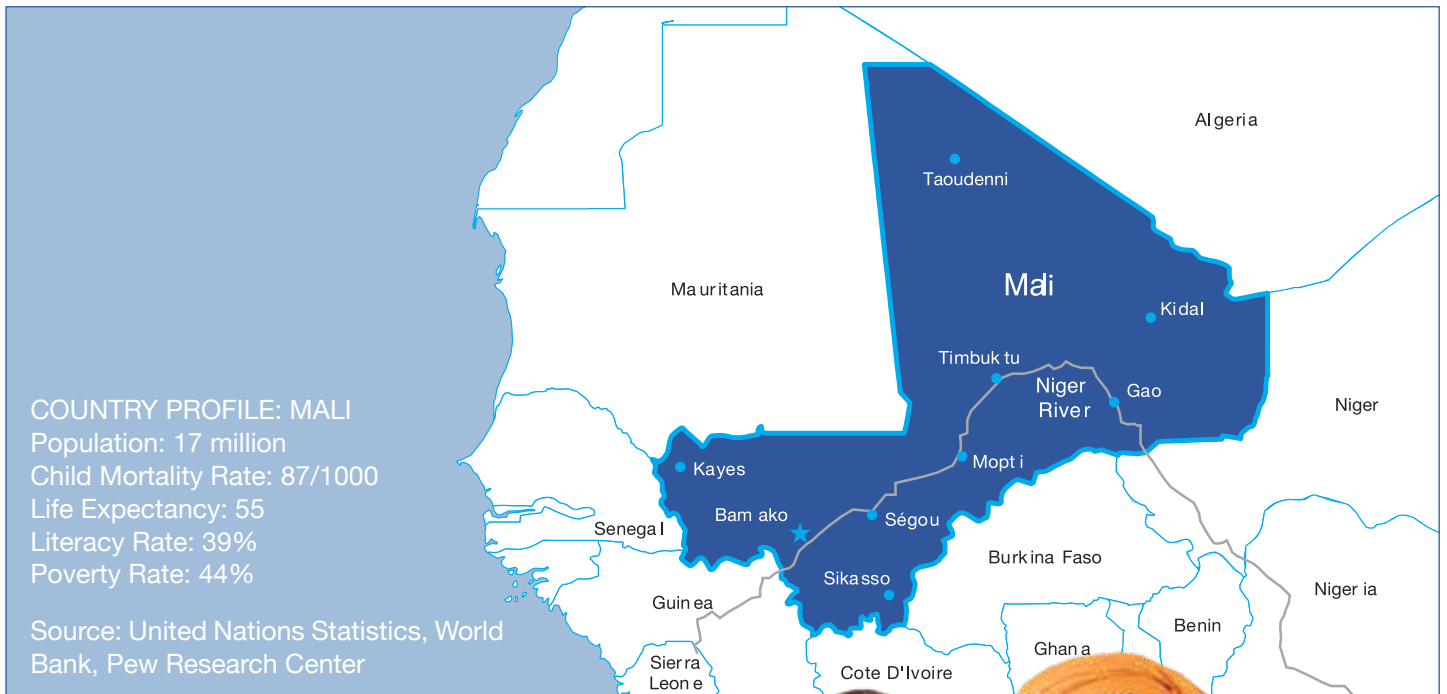
ZF is also involved in several other initiatives in Turkey helping the Syrian refugee population, including education and orphan sponsorship.

3 MEDICAL SUPPORT

HEALTH AND HAPPINESS: CLINICS IN MALI LEAVE POSITIVE IMPACT

Many communities throughout the world still suffer from preventable, treatable diseases, such as malaria. This takes too large a toll every year in lost lives and potential. ZF's healthcare programs, such as a recently launched project in Mali, aim to eliminate health risks at their source by providing health education for families, vital medicines and medical equipment, and trained medical staff who know what is needed for the local conditions.

ZF is opening 5 new medical clinics in Bamako and Nioro to provide comprehensive care to the poor and underserved, stamping out the root causes of chronic disease and paving the way for healthy, happy families.



Interview with ZF Health Advisor, Mrs. Donna Demir, regarding her field visit to Mali, August 2016

Transcript has been lightly edited for clarity and structure.

Jamie Merchant: So why were you visiting Mali recently? What work were you carrying out on behalf of ZF?

Donna Demir: My primary purpose was to do an assessment on the five ZF-sponsored medical clinics we have there. But, whenever ZF staff travel to our foreign offices, we make it a point to check out our other projects and campaigns as well. So I also did an observation of some of our wells in the area, and had a luncheon at our office in Bamako with our Mali staff members and some of the orphans and families from the community. Whenever a ZF representative travels to one of our offices abroad, the community members are always excited and like coming out to meet us, and we want to make it a special experience for them, so we like hosting events like that. It really means something for people to actually see you there, knowing that you came so far to see them.



JM: Which cities/towns did you visit, and which ZF-sponsored facilities?

DD: Mainly Bamako, the capital where ZF's Mali office is located, and some of the surrounding suburbs.

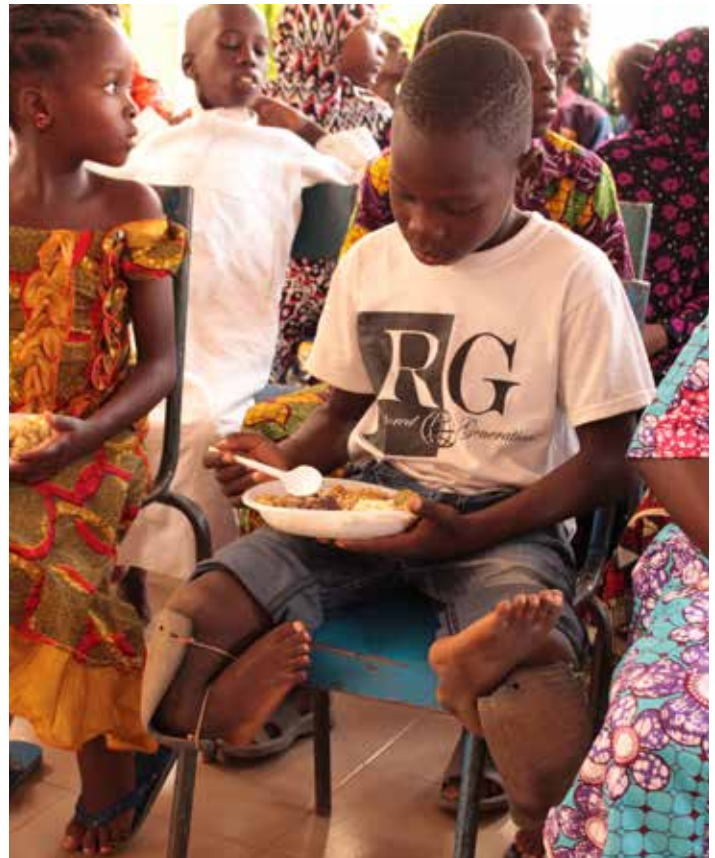
JM: What would you identify as the most urgent challenges facing these communities in Mali right now?

DD: From a medical perspective, it's malnutrition that is doing so much damage to these communities, which, in theory, is easy to remedy, but it's just a chronic, horrible problem. And it's a problem I've read and studied, but to confront it in the face - it's a great concern. It's related to the lack of pre-natal testing as well as the prevalence of birth defects. So many children are born with debilitating, often fatal birth defects, and don't survive as a result. That's tied to maternal malnutrition, but it's also because of a lack of preventative care. Many of these children are born with birth defects, but it's so easily preventable, if people are given the medical resources they need.

JM: And how is ZF helping to address these needs and challenges, specifically?

DD: We've had amazing growth in our sponsored medical clinics. Altogether, these clinics are now serving around 55,000 people annually, which is outstanding considering they've only been open a few months. And these clinics are providing basic but absolutely vital services like polio immunizations. When I visited them, they were just packed, and the people were so happy to be there. I should mention that the World Health Organization (WHO) has been a great partner in this work, and knows the specific needs of these communities in detail, so their help and guidelines have been indispensable. The bottom line is that more and more women are becoming aware of the clinics, and they're coming to them in droves.

Another recent project we did that was very helpful, and so simple, was to replace a rickety, unsafe roof on one of the clinics. The roof was so unstable and rough that the refrigerator holding the immunizations was basically exposed to the weather. When government inspectors came, they almost took away the immunization supplies, because it was hazardous for them to be outside. But ZF rebuilt the roof into a much more solid structure, so that won't be a risk anymore. It's something simple, but it made a huge difference.



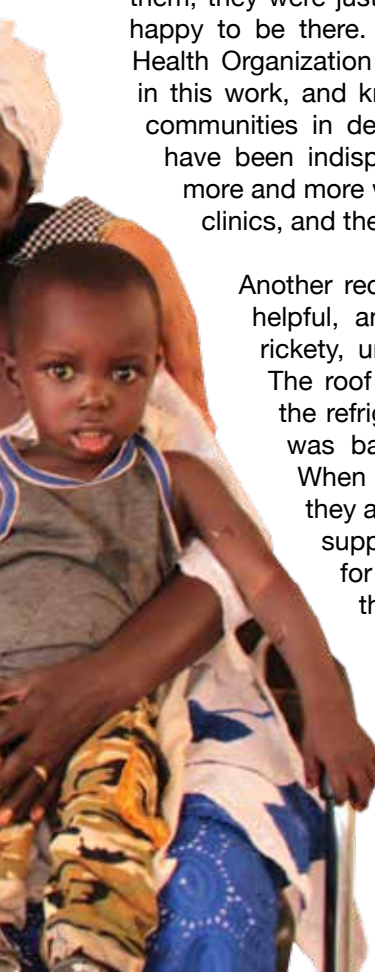
JM: Looking forward, how will ZF continue to help empower people facing difficult conditions in these areas of Mali? What programs and expansions are on the horizon?

DD: Well, the Bamako office was set up as a prototype to give us an idea of what can be done in the area. As things improve there, and they have been, it gives us a sense of what will work best for these communities.

We plan on continuing to expand our clinics, but we're also expanding our sponsored schools in the area by

These clinics are now serving around 55,000 people annually, which is outstanding considering they've only been open a few months. And these clinics are providing basic but absolutely vital services like polio immunizations.

adding some classrooms. There are some classrooms with over 100 students packed into the same room; it's totally unsustainable. So we're building classroom extensions to provide better opportunities for education there.





I also have to say that we have an amazingly valuable team on the ground in our Mali office. It's been incredibly valuable to have a competent team of expert staff there as they know the cultural and social requirements in these communities very well and provide expert advice on the best course of action. It's absolutely crucial because a project, no matter how well-intentioned, can come to nothing because it disturbs local norms or doesn't follow



the established way of doing things, whatever they might be. In one village, a school was built, but not according to the government's established code, so they won't pay for teachers and staff. Now it's being used to house goats, instead of educating children. That's just another example of why it is so important to have trained local staff.



“ We plan on continuing to expand our clinics, but we're also expanding our sponsored schools in the area by adding some classrooms. There are some classrooms with over 100 students packed into the same room; it's totally unsustainable. So we're building classroom extensions to provide better opportunities for education there. ”

❖ PROVIDING PALESTINE WITH HEALTHCARE & MEDICAL SUPPLIES

According to the Specialized Clinics Association in Palestine (SCAP), the health crisis in Palestine is worsening with chronic diseases such as diabetes and cancer afflicting many Palestinians' lives. For this reason, in 2016 ZF sent over a quarter of a million dollars worth of medical supplies to Palestine in partnership with Globus Relief. The shipment of medical supplies to three hospitals and an orphan clinic included wheelchairs, walkers, and diabetes screening devices. **Your generous contributions are helping over 40,000 people in the West Bank and Gaza.**

In 2014, through a partnership with American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA), ZF donors also funded the mass treatment of underprivileged children at 15 Gaza preschools with anti-parasitic medicine, hygiene, and preventative health training programs for mothers.



MEDICAL SUPPORT

MEDICAL SUPPLIES

Understanding the gravity of the humanitarian crisis, in 2015 ZF teamed up with ANERA to deliver medicine and medical supplies worth more than \$2.7 million to **37 healthcare facilities across the Gaza Strip, helping over 100,000 beneficiaries**. The main recipients of these shipments included: Public Aid Society, Shifa Hospital, the Society for the Physically Handicapped, and the Palestine Red Crescent Society's Al Amal and Al Quds hospitals.

These shipments included life-saving items such as antibiotics, chronic disease medicines for high cholesterol, blood pressure, and diabetes, vitamins, and nutritional supplements for pregnant women and children, along with other urgent care medications. Part of this shipment also included wheelchairs, canes, and crutches. Hundreds of highly needed disposable medical supplies were also delivered, including facemasks, sutures (for sewing wounds), bandages, gauze, and diapers.



MENTAL WELL-BEING

In the conflict zones of the world, one aspect often overlooked is the impact of war on human psychology—especially for children. **GAZA CURRENTLY HAS AT LEAST 375,000 CHILDREN REQUIRING IMMEDIATE PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT AS DOCUMENTED IN 2014.** Thus, ZF partnered with the Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF) to provide comprehensive mental health support to these youth and children.

With trauma, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) prevalent in Gaza, PCRF and ZF are treating families with therapeutic sessions and medicine, while teaching and encouraging families to express themselves through words, drawings, and movement. This program will last for a whole year (2015-2016) with a goal of treating at least 250 children.



ORPHAN

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM (OSP)

Narrated Sahl bin Sa'd:

The Prophet (saw) said, **“I and the person who looks after an orphan and provides for him, will be in paradise like this,”**

putting his index and middle fingers together.

Sahih Al-Bukhari (Book 78, Hadith 26)

According to UNICEF, the number of orphans is growing increasingly throughout the world. The conflicts in Palestine and Syria, in particular, have created entire generations of youth whose childhoods are marked by war.

These staggering numbers only encourage Zakat Foundation of America (ZF) to expand orphan sponsorship programs. **In 2015, ZF sponsored over 1,000 orphans around the world including Palestine, Syria, India, Ghana, Turkey, and many more.** Another OSP was also recently launched in Pakistan.

Learn how you can support an orphan with food, shelter, and an education at www.zakat.org.

“Zakat Foundation was like my guardian angel. It saved me from negative thoughts and gave me hope. I started depending on myself, and I didn't have to ask for anyone's help. I was able to provide for my child and our future.” - Sahar, Aleppo, Syria

“Due to the help of Zakat Foundation, I am now not asking money from anyone and I am not in debt. It's just like my husband is looking after us. I will never forget the financial assistance given by ZF.” - Zulfika, Sri Lanka

“I'm very happy going to school and having good friends. When I grow up, I want to be a lawyer.” - Mohammad Ayman, India

Recently, ZF Health Advisor Donna Demir visited Mali as part of a field trip on behalf of Zakat Foundation of America. Mrs. Demir

visited ZF's regional office, located near Bamako, and met with some of the children sponsored by ZF's Orphan Sponsorship Program. After sharing a hearty lunch with the community, several children spoke about their relationship to ZF.



Omar Farota, a 13-year-old boy who is never without his Zakat Foundation t-shirt, has been able to continue his studies with ZF's help, despite having lost his father seven years ago and struggling to help his widowed mother make ends meet with her laundry service. Support from ZF has been crucial for his continued progress, and they both firmly believe that through Zakat Foundation he will reach his goal of employment through education.



D'jelika, 15, is a young woman with an especially harsh upbringing. Orphaned by her father in sixth grade after her mother passed away, she went to live with two of her aunts, both of whom also passed away. Because of this terrible luck, she is viewed as cursed and has trouble finding good caretakers. However, since receiving ZF sponsorship, she has avoided a life of toil and distress, and is fulfilling her wish for an education, despite having been set back in her progress by her difficulties. A third aunt, with whom D'jelika is currently staying, reports she is doing well in school, and that she prays for ZF every day.

❖ SADAQA JARIYAH

THE GIFT OF PERPETUAL GIVING

Zakat Foundation of America's (ZF) Sadaqa Jariyah program focuses on providing resources to communities in need so they may empower themselves. Sadaqa Jariyah is an Islamic charitable tradition in which donors contribute to the creation or support of a service that will continue to benefit people over time. This not only ensures long-term benefits for those who receive it, but also perpetual rewards for those who support it, long after the donor passes away.

ZF's Sadaqa Jariyah program includes the construction of water wells for communities who do not have access to clean drinking water. We have also funded several educational programs, including a vocational training center (VTC) for refugee women so they may acquire skills and gain employment. In addition, ZF has funded several new mosques which have acted as crucial community centers where beneficiaries can worship in peace and gather for social events.



B Hussein Mosque, Philippines



Al-Sadia Mosque, Philippines



Rahman Mosque, Gambia

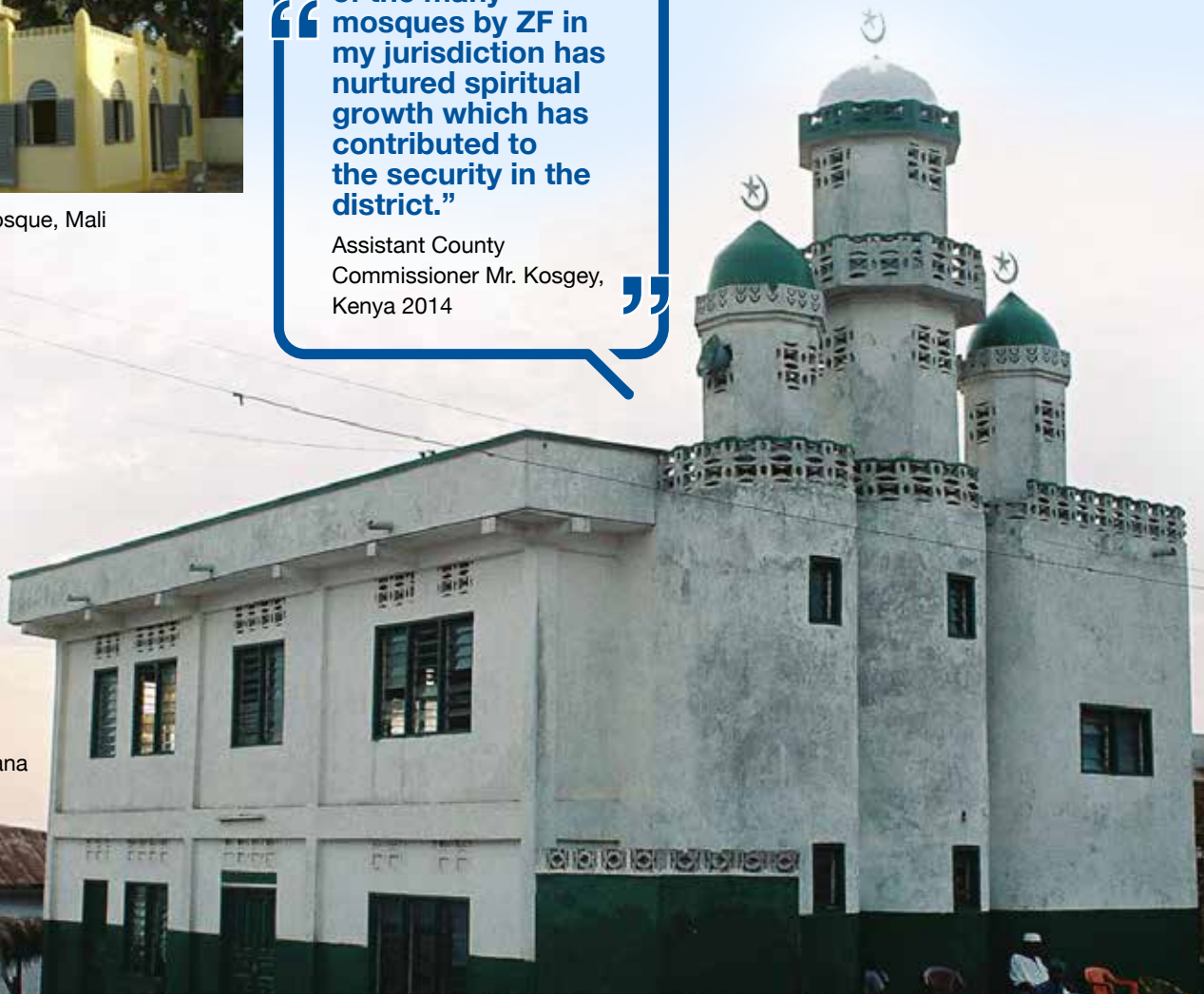


Niono Mosque, Mali

“The construction of the many mosques by ZF in my jurisdiction has nurtured spiritual growth which has contributed to the security in the district.”

Assistant County Commissioner Mr. Kosgey, Kenya 2014

Wenchi Mosque, Ghana



A LASTING LIVELIHOOD THROUGH LIVESTOCK

Healthy, productive livestock are among the most fruitful charitable gifts, providing steady nourishment for families and a sustainable source of income.

This year, ZF is scaling up from the successes of its past livestock programs to supply a thousand families in ten countries: Mali, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Niger, Kenya, Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, and Uganda, focusing mainly on African countries afflicted with debilitating, chronic poverty.

With Allah's blessing, these animals will be the seeds of a flourishing future for many generations to come, promising bountiful blessings and rewards for the donor.



WATER: *a source of* LIFE

Diseases from dirty water kill more people every year than all forms of violence, including war. In response to this global issue, Zakat Foundation of America (ZF) continues to install water wells and hand pumps to communities deprived of fresh sources of water.

Since the water well program began, ZF has constructed over 300 water wells and handpumps in Central Asia and the African continent serving over 1.4 million people.

You can support the water well program in a number of ways. ZF is always looking forward to collaborating with youth groups or organizations who wish to fundraise for water wells.


"I absolutely do not think we are too young and small to take on these big problems. My rule as a follower of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is to help others and to never think you aren't good enough. What you need is Allah (swt), and your own belief in yourself." - ZF Youth Volunteer



AQEEQAH CELEBRATING BIRTH & INVITING BLESSINGS

The birth of a newborn child brings immense joy to a family. Aqeeqah is a generous program through which new parents and family members can celebrate the miracle of birth while inviting the blessings of the All-Merciful by doing charity in the name of the new baby.

ZF facilitates the Islamic tradition of Aqeeqah by dedicating the best quality livestock and distributing fresh meat to needy families in low-income communities at home and abroad on behalf of the grateful parents and their newborn child. Donors can arrange Aqeeqah on behalf of their own children or as a gift for loved ones in any of the countries where ZF works. Celebrate the birth of your child by giving back to those in need.



The Prophet Muhammad
(peace and blessings be upon him) said:

“For the child, there should be aqeeqah, on behalf of the child make sacrifice, and remove the hair.”

EMERGENCY RELIEF

It's already being called the next global humanitarian crisis by human rights organizations. Although not at the forefront of mainstream media, broad swathes of South and East Africa are suffering from the worst drought in years, leading to insufficient harvest for a region of the world already struggling with high rates of malnutrition. According to the UN's World Food Programme, some 60 million people across the Horn of Africa are facing acute food shortages in 2016.

To address the hunger crisis, Zakat Foundation of America (ZF) has initiated an emergency food aid program to the Horn of Africa, including Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya.

"I did not expect to see the dead bodies of so many animals, strewn across the ground like that. It was a chilling experience," recounted ZF Programs Director, Kemal Birru, who visited Ethiopia and Kenya in the spring of 2016 to survey the situation.

"After coming to Ethiopia I am happy and sad, as ZF Program Director and as an Ethiopian," Birru said. "There was so much joy in the people's eyes when they saw us, the ZF staff, but the conditions are terrible. There has been almost no rain for 2 years in the eastern part of the country. The most immediate need is food, because so many of the animals have died from the extreme drought."

THE CLOCK IS TICKING IN THE HORN OF AFRICA



"The local governments have been desperately trying to get the attention of international authorities for emergency

aid, but the authorities are preoccupied with other crises - no one is really paying attention to what is happening here. After seeing firsthand the harsh conditions and the misery of the local people, I am proud that we are doing our part, but we need to do more. We must do more."



HELP ALLEVIATE THE HUNGER CRISIS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA BY DONATING AT ZAKAT.ORG.



ROHINGYA REFUGEES

Zakat Foundation continues to provide aid for Rohingya refugees, granting them job opportunities, winter kits, and most recently for Rohingya refugees in Chicago, Eid gifts.



SYRIAN REFUGEES AND IDPs

The Syrian Refugee Crisis remains the largest displacement issue of our time, with 4 million external Syrian refugees and 6 million internally displaced. Zakat Foundation of America has been actively carrying out humanitarian projects from all angles, providing Syrian refugees with necessary food, winter clothing, education, and more.



REBUILD GAZA

Over 18,000 homes were destroyed during the 2014 attack on Gaza. Now, Zakat Foundation of America (ZF) is working with the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) to repair and rebuild homes to provide shelter for Palestinians in Gaza.



HORN OF AFRICA HUNGER CRISIS

Due to a disastrous drought, the Horn of Africa is now facing food insecurity on a massive scale. Millions of people are at risk of starvation in a region already struggling with high malnutrition rates. ZF is already mobilized on the ground delivering food aid.

U.S. PROGRAMS

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SERVICE

Although Zakat Foundation of America (ZF) is known for its international humanitarian work, the organization also does significant work across the United States. The U.S. Programs team is consistently involved in empowering communities across the nation through a number of relief and service-oriented initiatives including food drives, winter kit distributions, emergency relief operations, backpacks and school supplies, tutoring and education, and cultural programs.

In 2016 alone, the ZF U.S. Programs team has coordinated a number of community-focused events that promote dialogue, social justice, and art as a platform to inspire effective change.

PRAYER OF THE OPPRESSED

ZF began the year with Prayer of the Oppressed, an interfaith event that also raised awareness on the issue of gun violence on the streets of Chicago.



NIGHT OF URBAN SOLIDARITY

ZF supported the Community Cafe event, a night dedicated to music, spoken word, dance, comedy, and urban solidarity. Performers included hip-hop artists Brother Ali and Mick Jenkins.



THE BLACK FOOTPRINT

To celebrate Black History Month, ZF hosted The Black Footprint, an evening of art and education about the rich connections between African-American culture and Islam.



GIVING BACK TO CHICAGO'S YOUTH

In the spring of 2016, the ZF U.S. Programs team devoted time to interacting with inner-city youth on a number of creative workshops.



PAINTING WITH A PURPOSE

Organized as a fundraiser to support the education of Syrian refugee children, ZF's Painting with a Purpose event brought the Chicago community together to increase awareness about this cause.



PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

Student volunteers from DePaul University joined ZF on Vincentian Service Day to plant a community garden on the South Side.



FASTING FOR HUMANITY

During the holy month of Ramadan, ZF organized a dinner for the homeless on the city's West Side.



CHICAGO BLOCK PARTY

The block party brought together an entire neighborhood for an evening of music, food, and peace.



RAMADAN FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS

From the East to the West, ZF provided Ramadan meals to the underprivileged in several cities across the U.S. In the photo below, volunteers in Philadelphia prepare food packages to distribute to low-income families and the homeless.



FASTING FORWARD

In August, ZF helped organize a march with Saint Sabina Church in the Auburn Gresham neighborhood of Chicago to promote peace in the violence-affected neighborhood. Participants were encouraged to fast during the day in solidarity with those affected by violence.



GOVERNMENT & INTERFAITH RELATIONS

DELEGATION OF U.S. SENATORS VISIT GAZIANTEP:

ZF Executive Director Khalil Demir recently met with a delegation of U.S. Senators and Congressional Representatives in Turkey. Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC), David Perdue (R-GA), and Thom Tillis (R-NC) along with Representatives David Jolly (R-FL), Adam Kinzinger (R-IL), and Tom Rice (R-SC) were given a detailed overview of ZF's refugee aid program both in the U.S. and in Gaziantep, a large city just across the border from Syria.



INTERACTION VISITS AL-ZAHRA UNIVERSITY:

ZF has the privilege of being a member of InterAction, an alliance of globally conscious NGOs committed to tackling the world's most pressing problems together. InterAction's CEO, Sam Worthington, and Vice President of Humanitarian Policy and Practice, Patricia MacIlreavy, both recently toured ZF's facilities in southern Turkey, including Al-Zahra University in Gaziantep, which have overseen relief efforts for thousands of Syrian refugees in recent years.



U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JANICE SCHAKOWSKY VISITS ROHINGYA CULTURE CENTER:

To help the Rohingya refugee community in Chicago better know their government representatives, ZF facilitated a meeting between leaders from the Rohingya Culture Center (RCC) in Chicago with U.S. Representative Janice Schakowsky (D-IL). It was a historic milestone for Chicago's growing Rohingya community, as this was the first time in many years that individuals from this stateless, vulnerable group sat down, face-to-face, with a representative of a national government who listened and responded to their concerns.



SWEDISH DELEGATION VISITS ZF HEADQUARTERS IN CHICAGO:

A Swedish delegation comprised of top law and security officials visited ZF headquarters in the spring to learn more about the organization's international humanitarian work for refugees. Given the global refugee crisis and the large number of individuals and families seeking shelter and support in European countries, ZF's presentations helped provide the delegation with insight on how ZF's programs have not only included emergency humanitarian aid but long-term solutions such as education programs and support for building cultural centers in new countries of residence.



CATHOLIC-MUSLIM IFTAR DURING RAMADAN:

The Chicagoland Catholic and Muslim community recently came together for their annual iftar which has continued to bring the groups closer in friendship. Speakers presented on the parallels between the Catholic and Islamic faiths and how the groups are working and can work together to better serve humanity. At the event, the Catholic Archbishop of Chicago, Blase Cupich, was also presented with an honorary gift from Khalil Demir, Executive Director of Zakat Foundation of America. (Photo credit: Gary Middendorf, Daily Southtown)



U.S. AMBASSADOR TO TURKEY VISITS ZF REFUGEE SCHOOL: The Syrian refugee students at one of the ZF-sponsored schools in Gaziantep were delighted to receive a visit from the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, John R. Bass. Mr. Bass visited the school in Gaziantep and applauded ZF's charitable work. He acknowledged and emphasized the need for such efforts in the region, stating, "We want to thank Zakat Foundation and American-Muslims who help support Syrians in need at a time when need is so great. And there will always be more which needs to be done and resources to be given. But the generosity and spirit you show is remarkable. And to see the result in the classroom is truly inspiring. Shukran jazilan. Tebrikler. Cok tesekkurler."



A HISTORIC MEETING TO PROMOTE HUMAN WELFARE:

Prof. Dr. Numan Kurtulmuş, the Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey and one of the country's most high-ranking political officials, recently visited ZF corporate headquarters in Bridgeview, Illinois. The Deputy Prime Minister met with ZF Executive Director Khalil Demir, with whom he discussed ZF's extensive services and programs in Turkey, as well as ZF's work serving the underserved around the world. The visit promoted a dialogue of mutual understanding and shared purpose, as ZF and the Turkish delegation agreed to continue strengthening a productive and powerful partnership for advancing human welfare not just in Turkey, but anywhere it is possible to help those who need it most.



A DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT ERDOĞAN:

As world leaders convened in New York City for the 71st United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Khalil Demir, Executive Director of Zakat Foundation of America (ZF), once again had the pleasure of meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey. Mr. Demir briefed President Erdoğan on ZF's international work, including its current campaigns supporting Syrian refugees in Turkey. Mr. Erdoğan commended organizations such as ZF who have mobilized Muslims in the United States to help make a positive difference in the world.



Want to make a positive difference in someone's life? Get involved with Zakat Foundation! We are always looking for caring, generous people with a great attitude and a desire to change the world for the better. Whether you are distributing food and supplies to disadvantaged communities, joining an emergency relief team, helping raise funds for water wells with your local youth group, on your school campus, or simply by handing out brochures at your local mosque, volunteering with ZF is a rewarding experience you will be sure to remember.

Get involved and help empower our brothers and sisters in need around the world! E-mail GetInvolved@zakat.org for more information.

Abu Dhabi: Students at the American School in Abu Dhabi raise funds for the construction of water wells by hosting a carnival-themed "well fair."



Universal School: Universal School BBQ raises funds for Zakat Foundation's Rebuild Gaza campaign.



UIC SAFEHR: UIC's SAFEHR (Students for the Advancement of Freedom, Equality, and Human Rights) holds "Arts for Humanity" dinner and raises funds for Zahra University in Turkey.



Loyola MSA: Loyola MSA fundraises enough to sponsor six orphans.



Volunteers in Delaware: The Food Bank of Delaware recently hosted a CAngeineering competition in which different organizations attempt to build the best creative model out of donated canned food items.

Soup Kitchen Day: Muslim Soup Kitchen Project distributes 3,000 meals across ten different states as part of National Muslim Soup Kitchen Day.

Tinley Park Youth: Nearly 25 girls initiated #ProjectIhsan as part of their Tinley Park youth group and fundraised enough to install a hand pump for a water well.



Rockford Water Wells: Rockford Muslim youth raise \$15K for water wells project.



St. Xavier Basketball Fundraiser: St. Xavier MSA collects \$3,000 during a basketball game for water wells.



Game Night Fundraiser at ICW: The Muslim Homeschoolers of Chicago partnered with ZF and the Islamic Center of Wheaton for a successful game night that raised funds to build two water wells overseas.



RECOGNITIONS OF EXCELLENCE



ZF RECEIVES 4 STARS FROM CHARITY NAVIGATOR

Zakat Foundation of America (ZF) is proud to announce that it has again received a four star rating from Charity Navigator, which is its highest possible rating. Charity Navigator's exclusive four star rating is reserved for exceptional non-profit organizations that exhibit the most responsible fiscal management and a demonstrated commitment to transparency and accountability. It is only awarded after a rigorous and extensive data-driven examination shows that a given organization is run with the highest ethical standards.

"Receiving four out of a possible four stars indicates that your organization adheres to good governance and other best practices that minimize the chance of unethical activities and consistently executes its mission in a fiscally responsible way," said Michael Thatcher, the CEO of Charity Navigator, in a letter to ZF.

"Approximately a quarter of the charities we evaluate have received our highest rating, indicating that the Zakat Foundation of America outperforms most other charities in America."



July 25, 2016

Zakat Foundation of America Honored as 2016 Top-Rated Nonprofit

GreatNonprofits.org award based on positive online reviews

Zakat Foundation of America (ZF) was recently honored with a prestigious 2016 Top-Rated Award by GreatNonprofits, the leading provider of user reviews about nonprofit organizations.

"We are honored to be named a Top-Rated Nonprofit," says Jamie Merchant, PR Coordinator for ZF. "We are proud of our accomplishments this year, including reaching over 40 countries for Ramadan, and partnering with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to repair and reconstruct homes for 500 displaced families in the Gaza Strip."

The Top-Rated Nonprofit award was based on the large number of positive reviews that ZF received – reviews written by volunteers, donors and clients. People posted their personal experience with the nonprofit. "Beautiful work done here," wrote one reviewer from the general public. "Zakat Foundation's people are the most selfless and humble people I've ever worked with," the reviewer continued. "They help everyone no matter who, what, or where you came from."

While the Top-Rated Awards run through the end of October, ZF was part of the inaugural group to qualify for the year. In addition, ZF has been added to GreatNonprofits #GivingTuesday Guide—an interactive guide to top nonprofits throughout the years. This will be released by the end of 2016.

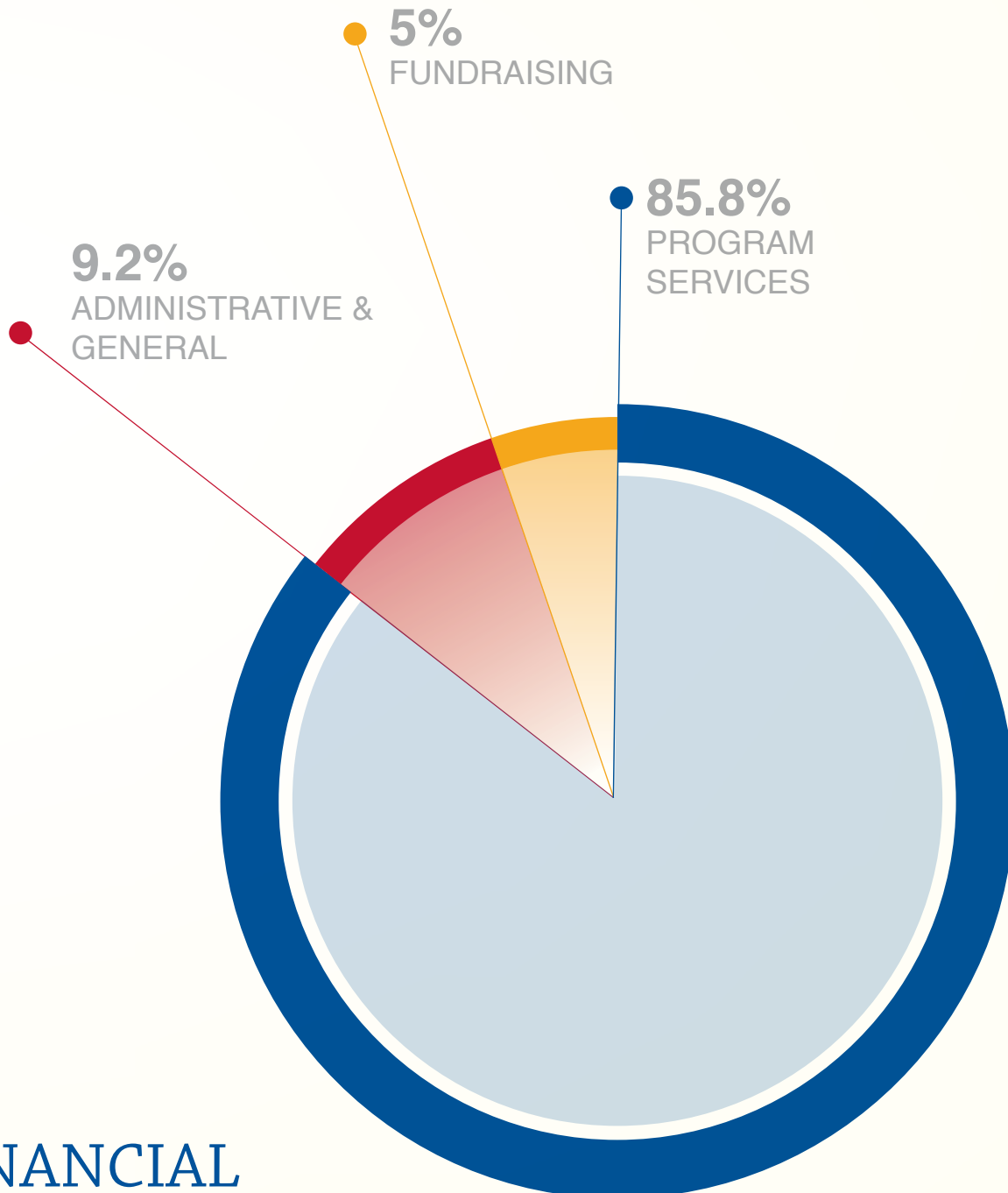
"Savvy donors want to see the impact of their donations more than ever," said Perla Ni, CEO of GreatNonprofits, "People with direct experience with Zakat Foundation have voted that the organization is making a real difference."

Being on the Top-Rated list gives donors and volunteers more confidence that this is a credible organization. The reviews by volunteers, clients and other donors show the on-the-ground results of this nonprofit. This award is a form of recognition by the community.

ZAKAT: AN OBLIGATION WE MUST FULFILL

By the grace of Allah (swt) and the generosity of our donors, Zakat Foundation of America (ZF) is the leader in empowering lives through your Zakat.

ZF's website, zakat.org, also serves as an educational resource on zakat and zakat-related issues, offers a Zakat Calculator and Worksheet, and gives you the opportunity to ask a question and get answers with the click of a button.



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