

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2024

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OPERATION MERCY

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Names have been changed in this report

**PART ONE:**

ABOUT US

WHERE WE WORK

GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS:

We work primarily in Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. We aim to be bridgebuilders and peacemakers, approaching individuals with hearts of faith and trust, along with an attitude of learning. This mindset, together with our long-term strategies and focus on cultural and language acquisition, has made us an organisation that is respected and successful in community development, even in these often-neglected regions and their complex settings.

OFFICES:

Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, North Macedonia, Türkiye, Sweden (International Headquarters)

PARTNERS:

Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, North Africa, Tajikistan, Pakistan

Operation Mercy in the context of international development

Last year I started my thoughts here with the theme of complexities and disruptions – 2024 has certainly not been any different. Despite that, my conclusion from last year stands: we embrace the complexities to restore hope, build capacity and promote community!

One of my highlights of 2024 and a beautiful example of our vision in action was my first ever visit to Mosul, Iraq. I had the opportunity to meet people who have survived some of the greatest horrors in recent history but are now rebuilding their city with joy, hope and a lot of beauty. Our team's contribution to this really lifted my spirit and fuelled me throughout the year to continue the work before us.

Our world is increasingly becoming a place of polarisation. When I look at the international development sector, the connected politics paint a dark and discouraging picture. We used to talk about localisation of aid and empowering the national partners,



but now nationalism and “us first” policies in many western nations leave these partners cut off from resources.

As Operation Mercy, we know that it is not at desks in western countries where the transformation happens, it is on the ground, in the community, with the people. More than ever before, we who live and work long-term with our partners are the voice that needs to be heard in a world of too-simple and too-quick answers. The perseverance and long-term partnership Operation Mercy offers, and the professional learning and insights we gain from that, can speak back into a polarised world.

Governments and major donors are cutting funding for the enormous needs around the world. Even with only a small portion of our funding being from government institutions — we have experienced one of the hardest years in our history in funding our projects. Despite often operating hand-to-mouth, we have still been able to continue to save lives, empower the marginalised and build community for the hopeless.

We embrace the complexities to restore hope, build capacity and promote community!

If you read this as someone who has contributed financially in 2024, let me say a huge *'Thank you'* at this point. We could not do our work without you — the small monthly donations, the larger grants from private philanthropic foundations, those who raise funds on our behalf, and those who advocate for our work - thank you for standing with us.


When we meet as a faith-based development community we are astonished by what is happening around us. We want to seek peace and focus on strategies that build an holistic wellbeing of communities. At the same time we watch the ever-shrinking space for civil society not only in developing nations but also in our home countries.

As people of hope we are called to step into this space, to face the storm and speak peace and hope into it. We are called more than ever before to be on the ground, interacting directly with those in need, and building bridges between cultures and nations and the stakeholders supporting us.

I believe we are at a point in time where we, as people of faith, are called more than ever to love our neighbours globally and locally. We are called to provide food for the hungry, and to fight injustices. Where we can no longer depend and wait on society as a whole to become more human, and to build a good and just community, it is on us to set examples and keep going in our work. Our giving and our prayers come together to restore hope, build capacity, and promote communities in which we see the value of every human being, and love for all our neighbours.

Thank you for continuing to partner with us in these endeavours into 2025.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrea Vogt', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Andrea Vogt,
International Director, February 2025

»We do this
by working in partnership
with others to **restore hope,**
build capacity, and **promote**
community«



OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Our vision is to work in partnership with others to restore hope, grow capacity, and promote community through relief and development initiatives that help transform lives, including our own.

Mission and Purpose of the organisation and our change process

Operation Mercy is an international relief and development organisation with over 30 years of experience. The purpose of the organisation, as stated in the Charter, is to carry out relief and development work, primarily in North Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia. We are a community of professionals who serve the poor and marginalised through an array of community development and humanitarian aid projects.

We do this by working in partnership with others to restore hope, grow capacity, and promote community through relief and development initiatives that help transform lives, including our own.

In order to build a change process that we believe will bring lasting hope and strong flourishing communities, understanding their own capacity and how to grow it we keep the following three areas in mind:

TOUCHPOINTS

Through the years, Operation Mercy has gained special expertise in six areas of development, which we call our 'Touchpoints':

- Community health
- Community based rehabilitation
- Women's empowerment
- Vocational training and character formation
- Sport and development
- Sustainable agriculture

These are the areas where we have an opportunity to touch a community.

CORE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

We engage the community through:

- mutual strength and assets-based approach
- contribution and transformation
- inside-out and bottom-up approach

- people empowerment
- sustainability and reproducibility
- multiplication
- accountability
- values-based and rights-based approaches
- realistic optimism

FIVE KEY PRIORITIES

The final side of our change processes are our key priorities — the five P's of Prayer, Professionalism, Peace-making, Perseverance, and Partnership.

Together these three areas form the basis of Operation Mercy's integrated community development approach, through which we aim to bring lasting and sustainable transformational development.

RELIEF INTERVENTIONS

Relief interventions need a swift response. Even here we engage the community in a rapid form of our core development principles and keep our touchpoints and key priorities in mind for potential longer term development in an area affected by disaster.

ANSWERING THE QUESTION OF GOALS AND RESULTS

In line with this change process, we have set development goals for each Touchpoint area. As you proceed to our story section you will see specific problem statements and goals in the introductions.

These goals are in line with overarching themes such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but are also specific to our local communities.

Overarching goals for all our projects are:



FULL INCLUSION AND FULFILMENT OF POTENTIAL FOR ALL PEOPLE IN THEIR OWN CONTEXT

This applies especially to women, children and persons with disabilities, and also refugees and displaced people whose rights are often restricted. (SDGs 3, 4, 5, 8, 10)



INCREASE IN SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD, CONTRIBUTING TO FOOD SECURITY, HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

This applies especially to people facing hunger, and lack of clean water, ill health, unemployment, and economic crisis. (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13)



RESTORATION OF SELF-WORTH, SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-CONFIDENCE OF OUR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS, AND AN INCREASE IN HOPE AND POSITIVE EXPECTATIONS FOR THEIR FUTURE

This applies to all our projects and project participants, people who have experienced discrimination, marginalisation, trauma, and conflict. (SDGs 10, 16)

OUR FIVE P's

Prayer
Professionalism
Peace-making
Perseverance
Partnership

OUR CORE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Mutual strength and assets-based approach
Contribution and transformation
Values- and rights-based approach
Inside-out and bottom-up approach
Sustainability and reproducibility
Multiplication
People empowerment
Accountability
Realistic optimism

Operation Mercy's integrated community development approach

OUR TOUCHPOINTS

Community health
Women's empowerment
Sustainable agriculture
Sport and development
Community based rehabilitation
Vocational training and character formation

WHO WE ARE

Operation Mercy is an international relief and development organisation headquartered in Sweden. With over 30 years of experience, we are a community of professionals from many different nations who serve the poor and marginalised in 12 countries throughout Central Asia, North Africa and the Middle East through an array of community development and humanitarian aid projects.

Our community represents men and women, young and old, diverse languages, ethnicities, and faith backgrounds. Even though we are different, we are united in wanting to see people raised up, in and through community, because we share a hope that enables us to look beyond the pain and suffering, we encounter every day.





OPERATION MERCY IN NUMBERS

DIRECT PARTICIPANT SPLIT

<i>Community Based Rehabilitation</i>	5,540
<i>Women's Empowerment</i>	1,411
<i>Community Health</i>	65,137
<i>Sustainable Agriculture</i>	3,498
<i>Vocational Training and Character Formation</i>	5,261
<i>Sport and Development</i>	94
<i>Relief Interventions</i>	407

Total **81,348**

Total expenditure
in 2024

SEK **25,065,000** *
€ **2,187,114** **

International office costs vs
project costs:

9% vs **91%**

Total project
beneficiaries/participants

365,770

Ratio direct
project participants

women & children **91%**

men **9%**





Total Volunteer
Hours in 2024

50,417 hours

Valued at

SEK 10,133,817 ***
€ 884,254 **

Our motivated, long term, professional, and self-funded staff are among our greatest assets. They contribute more than 1/3 to the cost of each action completed!

THE CHALLENGE:

When **you give 500 €**, we add **200 €**-worth of volunteer hours. Together we impact 84 lives through restoring hope, building capacity and growing community.



Swish: 123 90 20 207
or mercy.se/give

90 SVENSK
KONTO INSAMLINGS
KONTROLL

- * Figures not final. Updated report with audited financial will be available June 2025.
- ** Exchange rates 11.4603 from <https://www.xe.com/currencycharts/?from=EUR&to=SEK>
- *** Based on the Swedish average wage in December 2024: 201 SEK/hour (<https://tradingeconomics.com/sweden/wages>)



PART TWO:

STORIES OF CHANGE



2024 INTERVENTIONS

RELIEF INTERVENTIONS



Interventions

Morocco earthquake relief,
Kazakhstan flood relief



Project figures

Number of projects	2
Total expenses	€ 290,971



Participants/country

Morocco	348
Kazakhstan	59

MOROCCO

Saiid's smile

Saiid was beaming, a grin splitting his face from ear to ear. Not only was his house finished to the point that he and his family could start living in it, but it looked so pretty with the traditional earthy tones of the natural lime plaster applied to the exterior walls.

Just a few short months earlier Saiid had been very sceptical when we told him the type of finish we hoped he would choose to use to cover the Compressed Earth Blocks (CEBs). The lime plaster finish we suggested would create a protective layer from the rains while still allowing the walls to 'breathe' and thus facilitate natural temperature control in the house. Not fully convinced, he decided to go ahead with our suggestion, knowing that he could always remove the plaster and apply a 'modern' cement finish if he really didn't like it.

Now, however, not only was Saiid thrilled with the look of his house, but the engineer in charge of the rebuilding for the area

then insisted that all the other houses had to follow suit and use the same finish to their exterior walls! In fact, villages in another area we are working in, quite some distance from Saiid's village, have now also been told they need to use the same type of finish on their houses.

Of course, the look of a house isn't as important as the protection it provides from the elements and the safe space it gives for a family to live in together. On that front, Saiid is also happy, having accepted our offer of building with CEBs, which we spent some months producing together right next to where his house is now built. Saiid is thrilled at how much warmer his house has been during the winter months because of the amazing insulation properties the CEBs have, compared to the modern cement blocks many people now build with. His wife, young daughter and mother are able to go about their lives much more comfortably now that they don't have to endure the chill of winter inside their house. Whenever he talks about his new house, a very proud Saiid cannot keep the smile from his face.



His wife, young daughter and mother are able to go about their lives much more comfortably now that they don't have to endure the chill of winter inside their house.

The 6.8 earthquake in Morocco on September 8, 2023, completely destroyed or partially compromised many houses throughout the High Atlas Mountains and other regions. Operation Mercy responded initially with temporary shelters and mental health and psycho-social support. Now we are building permanent structures like Saïid's home, and other buildings to serve the greater community. This is laying the foundations for our long term development goals. •

1

TOUCH POINT

COMMUNITY BASED REHABILITATION

In some societies, children with disabilities (CWD) and people with disabilities (PWD) are some of the most marginalised people and are often hidden from view due to stigma or lack of knowledge.

Operation Mercy works professionally with the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s Community Based Rehabilitation strategies and in line with the Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Jordan and Northern Iraq. Some of our aims are to seek to support and empower CWD and PWD and their caregivers, provide them with opportunities and to work with communities towards inclusivity.



Countries

Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan,
Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan



Participants/country

Iraq	120
Jordan	89
Kazakhstan	276
Kyrgyzstan	2,035
Tajikistan	3,020
Total	5,540



Project figures

Number of projects	5
Total expenses	€ 433,722



TAJIKISTAN

Full participation at school!

Romish is a 10-year-old boy, who has Cerebral Palsy. Last year he was enrolled into school but had to be home schooled due to the lack of accessibility at school. Sometimes his classmates visited him for a short time and he was also invited for the social events at school, but he was sad that he couldn't be with his peers, interact and learn with them every day.

His mother visited the school several times to talk to school authorities asking for assistance so that her boy could study at school with other students. The director of the school had also received some requests from parents to promote Inclusive Education in his school. He wanted to provide a barrier-free, friendly environment for children with disabilities at school.

In the summer, our organisation received a request to build a ramp and an accessible toilet at this school to allow the school to accept children with disabilities so that they could socialise and study with their peers.

Our partners in Tajikistan responded to this request and have built a ramp and an accessible toilet. The ramp at school is beneficial not only for children with disabilities but also to elderly people and others in the school community. When Romish came to school and walked on the ramp, he said: "I am so happy to be with my friend every day. I like reading and art lessons when I am in class. Thank you for giving me this opportunity!"

An elderly teacher also expressed her appreciation and said: "I love teaching children! I have been working in this school



"I am so happy to be with my friend every day."

for 10 years. This a real development and taking into consideration the needs of all in our school. It will help not only children with disability but also other school members to move around the school much easier!" •



When we first met Ahmed he was mainly walking on his tiptoes, with his legs slightly inwardly rotated.

IRAQ

Newly found confidence

Fifteen-year-old Ahmed lives in Iraq together with his extended family. Diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy, both of his heel chords are shortened, a common side-effect of the lifelong movement disorder. Unfortunately, his abnormal gait brought him much shame within his community.

When we first met Ahmed he was mainly walking on his tiptoes, with his legs slightly inwardly rotated. We started by simply giving him physical therapy exercises to improve his gait, and frequently spoke words of encouragement, reminding him of his infinite value. Over the course of a few weeks, we observed small steps of

improvement, but also realised that he would greatly benefit from surgery on his shortened heel chords.

A surgical intervention was made possible through Operation Mercy's partnership with another non-profit that performs orthopaedic surgeries on people who don't have the means to pay for such treatment.

Ahmed's surgery was performed in late March 2024, and he was soon able to return to his hometown. Our physical therapist and local nurse and case worker then started follow-up treatments. They visited Ahmed and his family weekly for wound care management and to instruct

him on how to do his post-surgical exercises.

In May, the casts on both sides were removed and the process of physical therapy rehabilitation started. Ahmed also received careful instructions on how to strengthen his core body and his lower extremities, as well as how to stretch his heel chords to prevent them from tightening up again.

Ahmed's gait and posture have significantly improved. His mother told us that prior to the surgery, Ahmed would often refuse to go on visits to relatives because he was too ashamed to do so – but this is not the

case anymore. He now feels free to go out of the house and on visits, thanks to his newly-discovered confidence.

Our current goal for Ahmed is for him to be secure and confident enough in walking so that he can return to school and finish his education. We believe that this is only the beginning of an encouraging journey for Ahmed and his entire family. •

...prior to the surgery, Ahmed would often refuse to go on visits to relatives because he was too ashamed to do so – but this is not the case anymore.



Jibek has also started to play with toys using her hands.

KYRGYZSTAN

Therapy chair

Jibek is a cheerful four-year-old girl who suffered a brain injury when she slipped out of her father's hand at the age of one month old. We can just imagine what pain and self-accusation her parents are going through.

The family decided to move from a rural area to the capital to get help for their daughter. The father works hard at a bazaar to provide for his family and pay for medicine and treatment.

They heard about our project, and when we spoke it quickly became clear that a chair would be a huge help for Jibek. She is not able to sit independently, and so spends most of her time lying on the floor. She can't control or use her hands well as she has not had the opportunity to do so while lying on

the floor. Her mother also finds it difficult to feed Jibek when she can't sit.

The family were able to contribute towards the cost of a specialised therapy chair for Jibek, with additional funds provided from project money. After about one month our social worker visited Jibek again. She really enjoyed her new chair and even after this very short time, it was clear that her body posture had already been improved.

Her mother was so thankful that she can now feed her daughter much more easily. Jibek has also started to play with toys using her hands. She pushes the ball off the table and is pleased when her mother reacts. This allows her to interact socially and further motivates her to use her arms and hands. •



2

TOUCH POINT

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

The biggest challenges facing agriculture today are climate change, soil degradation or excessive salinity in the soil, water scarcity, pests and diseases, and the need to ensure food security for a growing population.

Since 2014 the Agricultural Cooperation for Development (AC4D) programme in the Jordan Valley has been supporting farmers with techniques and readily accessible technologies to overcome these challenges. In the expanse of the Jordan Valley, Operation Mercy is helping farmers to establish productive and sustainable agriculture to provide fresh and nutritious fruit and vegetables to their communities and to support their livelihoods

Countries

Jordan	
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Participants/country

Jordan	3,498
Total	3,498

Project figures

Number of projects	1
Total expenses	€ 51,285

**JORDAN**

Farming in the Jordan Valley

Our Agricultural Cooperation for Development (AC4D) project in Jordan is working within communities to support farmers with immediately adoptable and cost-effective technologies to aid in the management of the most pressing issues in smallholder agriculture in the Middle East.

Our AC4D staff engaged with families on 30 farms this summer. They were invited into homes in the Jordan Valley for the first time and visited each family twice to consult with them on the results of their

soil and water tests and to get to know them more deeply.

Fahed is a farmer in Karama who grows mint and parsley. The team was pleased to meet his family and begin a dialogue with him about how he manages the units of land that they rent. He reported that one of the most significant issues that he faces is in the volume and quality of water he receives from our canal system. Our AC4D team are working with him on a plan to make the most of what is being provided. •

Fahed is a farmer in Karama who grows mint and parsley.

3




TOUCH POINT

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

In many of the communities in which we work, women are seen as unimportant, with no chance to make their voices heard or have their needs and wants addressed.

The shame that a community puts on a woman who is an impoverished, single mother feels like rocks that one must constantly carry in a backpack. The weight is so unbearably heavy that they take it out on their families by shouting at them, belittling them and sometimes physically punishing them.

Some of the women who attend our women's empowerment groups are divorced, some are single mothers, some are coming out of abusive relationships, and most live in poverty. Through the projects, we are empowering vulnerable women to release their potential. We believe that community members have the greatest potential to transform their own lives, their families and their communities.

 Countries	 Participants/country	
Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan	Kazakhstan	1,026
	Pakistan	66
	Tajikistan	319
	Total	1,411
 Project figures		
Number of projects	3	
Total expenses	€ 38,555	



PAKISTAN

Literacy among the mountain peaks

Nahida likes to study but she never had a chance to go to a school because her parents always moved from one place to another.

"I always had a desire to go to a school but I come from a shepherd family and in the summer we move up to high pastures for six months and care for our animals," explains Nahida. "Our parents never liked education and they also told us that going to a school is a waste of time."

In the fall of 2024, in a field surrounded by some of the highest mountain peaks in the Himalaya, 25 women graduated from our six-month mobile Adult Literacy Programme where they learned to read and write for the first time.

Nahida says, "Attending this centre, my eyes are opened and I have realised the importance of education. I am able

to read the prescription mentioned on different medicines. I have learned about the importance of health and hygiene. I have learned new things every day. I am so grateful for this rare chance to be enrolled at this centre." •

"I always had a desire to go to a school but I come from a shepherd family and in the summer we move up to high pastures for six months and care for our animals," explains Nahida. "Our parents never liked education and they also told us that going to a school is a waste of time."

Realities of trafficking: sparking freedom

Our teams visit a brothel each week to bring hope and compassion to the women working there. Visits are marked by both moments of connection and tragedy, highlighting the harsh realities faced by these women and their resilience amid unimaginable circumstances.

This woman, a foreign national, had been trafficked into the brothel when she was just 14 years old.

During one visit, we learned that one of the women had been murdered by a client. This woman, a foreign national, had been trafficked into the brothel when she was just 14 years old. At the time of her death she was 22. A week prior, she had shared her dream of finishing school and moving to America.

This loss weighed heavily on the women and there was a difficult atmosphere within the brothel. That week the administrator (pimp) allowed us to spend extra time at the brothel, recognising the

women's need for comfort and support after the recent tragedy. Interestingly, she also played a protective role, ensuring our team's safety and instructing clients to wait while we spent time with the women, praying with them, and listening to their stories. This unusual dynamic revealed the complexity of her role within the system.

Another woman, Ai, shared about the isolation the women experience. She explained that while they work together, they know little about one another



and each other's families. This lack of connection further underscores the challenges they face, not just physically but emotionally and relationally as well.

This visit highlighted the harsh realities of human trafficking, exploitation, and the loss of dreams and dignity that many of these women endure. However, it also demonstrated the power of presence, prayer, and listening in providing moments of comfort and hope. •

TAJIKISTAN

A beacon of hope and empowerment

Malika, a young woman from Tajikistan, is a poignant reflection of the challenges faced by many women in her community. Growing up in a traditional society, she was confronted with societal expectations that limited her opportunities and aspirations. However, through her participation in the Women's Empowerment Project (WEP), Malika was able to overcome the obstacles she faced and unlock her true potential, becoming a beacon of hope and empowerment for women and girls in her community.

Malika's journey began with her involvement in community meetings and surveys organised by the WEP. These

interactions provided her with a platform to share her experiences, learn from others, and gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by women in her community. Through these connections, she realised that she was not alone in her struggles and that there were people who believed in her and supported her aspirations. The WEP played a pivotal role in her personal and professional development. She received valuable leadership training, gained knowledge about women's rights, and benefited from the mentorship of experienced individuals.

These experiences helped her to overcome her self-doubt and develop the confidence she needed to pursue

Malika was able to achieve her dream of attending university and becoming an active member of her community. She founded a women's support group, providing a safe space for other women to share their experiences and receive encouragement.

her goals. With the support of WEP, Malika was able to achieve her dream of attending university and becoming an active member of her community. She founded a women's support group, providing a safe space for other women to share their experiences and receive encouragement. By mentoring young girls, Malika inspired them to break free from societal stereotypes and pursue their own dreams.

WEP is a powerful tool for empowering women and girls, helping them to break free from the shackles of poverty, discrimination, and oppression. Malika's journey is a source of inspiration for women and girls around the world. It



demonstrates the power of education, empowerment, and community support in overcoming adversity. By providing opportunities for personal and professional growth, WEP is making a significant contribution to the advancement of women's rights and the creation of a more just and equitable society. •

4

TOUCH POINT

COMMUNITY HEALTH

People who are marginalised and poor are more likely to have ill health, and people with ill health are more likely to be poor. It is a vicious cycle, and the key to breaking it is to help people make good evidence-based health decisions for their own and their families' health.

Operation Mercy works in Community Health among communities in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Jordan and North Macedonia. We work in areas such as maternal and child health and nutrition, health education, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH).



Countries

Afghanistan, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia and Tajikistan (and subcomponents of projects in Kazakhstan)



Participants/country

Afghanistan	40,940
Jordan	710
Kyrgyzstan	23,068
North Macedonia	242
Tajikistan	177
Total	65,137



Project figures

Number of projects	6
Total expenses	€ 893,213

KAZAKHSTAN

First Aid training programme

After living in Central Asia for a year and engaging closely with the local community, I noticed a significant gap in health knowledge. Many people would quickly panic in medical situations simply because they did not know how to respond. For example, if someone fainted, bystanders often felt helpless, unsure of what to do.

Together with our healthcare team, including two nurses, we began thinking about how we could support the community. We wanted to provide knowledge that would not only reduce fear and anxiety but also bring people together and create something sustainable. That is when the idea of a first aid training programme was

The response has been incredible.

born — practical, engaging, and easy to replicate.

Since launching the training, we have been invited to different community groups several times, including those for mothers of children with special needs, kindergarten teachers, and mixed groups of people from various backgrounds. The response has been incredible. The interaction during training sessions has been lively, and the hands-on practice has led to a lot of fun and engagement. By the end of each session, people were exchanging phone numbers, strengthening community connections.

One of the most memorable moments for me happened during a break when a participant asked, "Why are you doing this? Why did you come all the way from your home country?" This question was



a turning point—an opportunity to share the deep love in our hearts that motivates us to serve.

Through this training, we are not only equipping people with life-saving skills but also fostering a sense of community, trust, and openness. It has been a privilege to see how something as simple as first aid can bring people together and open doors for deeper conversations. •

AFGHANISTAN

Enabling national initiatives

Operation Mercy in Afghanistan is empowering and partnering with national Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's), one of which implemented a WaSH programme in 2024, in a village outside of Kabul city. This programme provided clean water to every household and offered workshops on health education. The village suffers from many diseases, most of which are caused by unsafe drinking water and poor sanitation.

Hamid is a resident of the village that benefitted from this project. He shared the following story about his family:

“Many of my family members were suffering from diarrhoea. I didn't understand what was causing this illness. My family members were very weak, and I often had to take them to the doctor. Most

of the money I spent went on medications. I was very distressed. Even a child under the age of five in my family caught this sickness and one of my children had even passed away due to it. My life became so difficult that I even thought about leaving the village.

“But during that time, a team from your organisation came to our village and informed us that they would gather the people and provide training. I participated in that training, and it was very interesting to me, especially since it covered topics related to diarrhoea.

“Through this training, I realised that my family had not been paying attention to using clean water and maintaining proper hygiene. After the training, I focused on teaching my family members to follow hygiene practices and to use clean water.

“Many of my family members were suffering from diarrhoea. I didn't understand what was causing this illness.”

After a few days, Alhamdulillah [praise be to God], the cases of diarrhoea in my family disappeared and everyone is now healthy. We live a much happier life, and my children are healthy.

“I am very grateful to your organisation for raising our awareness and helping us apply these practices in our lives to avoid dangerous diseases. May Allah bless you, and may you always lead a prosperous, healthy, and happy life.” •

AFGHANISTAN

Maternal and child nutrition and health

In Afghanistan we have had the privilege of running a health programme in a number of communities where we train men and women on essential elements of nutrition and health during pregnancy and in the early formative years of a child's life. Nutrition lessons have proven highly impactful both in the families of those who have attended the trainings, and in their communities where those who attend regularly pass on what they have learnt.

One of the men in the health education programme on nutrition shared that they previously had no knowledge about proper nutrition and childcare. He said that his child did not have a regular diet, nor was he properly cared for, which resulted in poor growth and development. However, after attending

the lessons he learned how to feed his child in a structured and proper way. After applying these lessons in his child's care he saw positive results so that his child is now growing better and is much healthier than before.

When project managers met with community leaders, they had very good feedback on health education. One said, "Prevention is better than cure. These lessons are very important for our community members. The lessons help

"Prevention is better than cure. These lessons are very important for our community members."

to raise their level of awareness. This is a gift that the community can always use!"

The community leaders have grasped the importance of these health trainings for empowering their community members for better health. Having this support of community leaders in the health programmes is critical, because they now are happy to encourage their community members to attend the group trainings, and they even help in forming those groups.

Operation Mercy's partnership with a new and emerging national non-governmental organisation has built their confidence and capacity, enabling Afghans to impact communities with acts of compassion. •

KYRGYZSTAN

Healthy eating

The doctors were stunned. “You can't be improving! No matter how many medications we gave you, no matter what you did, you always had to come to the doctor! But now you're feeling better, both of you, so we've reduced the amount of medication.”

This is Nurzat's story of transformation through healthy eating. Before participating in the nutrition seminar her sugar index was 16 — a healthy range is between 3.9 and 5.6 — but with proper nutrition it dropped to 8.2.

Nurzat is a single mother, and she has three sons. Nurzat herself and her youngest, who is three, suffer from Type 2

diabetes. “There is a lot of suffering! Doctors just give medication. They don't give any other advice, and they don't say anything about what to eat,” explained Nurzat. Sometimes Nurzat would go to the doctor twice a week, even travelling at night by ambulance to get medications for their symptoms.

Then Nurzat started attending the seminar on healthy eating. She studied and applied what she learned in her life, reading about how diseases can be treated and prevented and how eating healthy foods can alleviate Type 2 diabetes. After she started following a healthy diet for diabetes, she noticed that both her and her child's health improved.

“I had no idea that there was such a thing as treating diseases with healthy eating”

Now they visit the doctor less often. The doctors were puzzled, saying, “No matter how many medications you took, you were never healthy and well. But we can see that you and your son are much improved.”

“Thank you very much,” Nurzat said. “I had no idea that there was such a thing as treating diseases with healthy eating and now I understand that the foods we eat affect our lives. Thank you for teaching us this!” •

5

TOUCH POINT

VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND CHARACTER FORMATION

Operation Mercy does Vocational Training and Character Formation among people who are experiencing poverty and inactivity in the workforce, giving them the skills and support they need to step into the workforce for financial independence, and improved self-esteem and sense of worth.

We also work with adults of all ages in places like Mosul, Iraq who have experienced indoctrination by ISIS and/or trauma related to war and flight within the past years. They are taught life skills and personal and career development, enabling them to identify practical ways to improve their lives and the circumstances of their families and communities.



Countries

Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, North Macedonia and Pakistan



Participants/country

Iraq	442
Jordan	578
Kazakhstan	3,486
North Macedonia	57
Pakistan	698
Total	5,261



Project figures

Number of projects	5
Total expenses	€ 156,854

NORTH MACEDONIA

Finding sunshine

Azra was first set up to be married to a man with mental challenges. Her second husband was a rapist, and Azra was his fourth wife. The third husband was kind but his children mercilessly abused her. She herself has had no children.

At home, there is no place which she can call her own. She thought she could use one room, but there was no space for private things. Despite the kindness of her husband, her hope to find some peace in this marriage was an illusion. The children's verbal abuse took its toll, leading to an attempt to take her own life and a prayer to Allah that she might sleep forever.

Like so many women, she had only had a couple of years of elementary schooling before being sent out to help at her father's business in the Turkish quarter at the age of seven. She grew up without a mother and with very little love and value.

When Azra first came to STEP, the project manager thought she had never seen a woman with more pain come into the programme. "We are walking through a mountain of abuse... we know it is a long road". Azra was so clever, yet so damaged.

STEP is Operation Mercy's Skills, Training, Empowerment and Practice (STEP) programme. With her intelligence, Azra has thrived in the business skills training. Her engagement in the business skills

"I learned that everyone who lived has value. We don't have to wait for others, we can be the first to value ourselves!"

training and her engagement in the Life Skills track of training was a model of honesty for the others. She facilitates group openness. She observed in the feedback evaluation, "The *Value* lessons were the ones I really liked.... I thought I could consider myself for the first time". For many, this lesson is a revelation. One woman wrote, "We did not know that we had an value." Another said, "I learned that everyone who lived has value. We don't have to wait for others, we can be the first to value ourselves!"

Other subjects like *Stress Management*, *Forgiveness*, *Moving On from Loss and Trauma*, and *Boundaries* have been challenging stepping stones to a better life. Another participant wrote



In the STEP programme, Azra is now part of the sewing group. (...) Her talent will put her in good stead as her team will bring money back into the programme through what they sell.

“boundaries are the main thing you need to arrive at the point of valuing yourself.” These life skills in the STEP programme are critical to the female participants whose lives are often a repository of family obligations and the expectations of others.

In the STEP programme, Azra is now part of the sewing group. She was already able to sew the most beautiful front pieces of embroidery at home and soon she will be producing dresses in the upcoming 'incubator phase' as one of the most

naturally skilled of the group. Her talent will put her in good stead as her team will bring money back into the programme through what they sell.

The STEP programme has a high rate of employment success (40 per cent within the first six months in the last cycle of training). Many are thinking of using their skills and professional certificate to start their own business. However, the STEP programme means something different right now for Azra. Nothing better in her life has happened to her, in her own words,

than when she joined the programme. This was something that was hers. She has tried everything to find some happiness. Could she ever find some sunshine in her life? Our STEP programme represented that chance in her life.

Azra's story and the testimonials of other STEP participants reflect the outcomes of the STEP programme, namely: To see growing numbers of women employed and supporting their families, and growth in community awareness of the value of women and their potential. •

IRAQ

Letting go of revenge

During the captivity of Mosul under ISIS many young women were forced into early marriage. Sometimes this was from their captors and other times the family would pressure girls to marry a cousin or extended family members in fear that they could be taken by ISIS. Enam was one such girl, who at 15 years old was forced to marry her cousin.

Unfortunately, her cousin was sick, unable to work, and in his own frustration and fear began to beat his new wife. Enam tried many times to seek out reconciliation or advice to no avail. After seven years of living in an abusive atmosphere Enam



couldn't go on and requested a divorce. As is customary, Enam moved back in with her parents along with her seven-year-old son. To help provide for her and her son, she got a job working at a hair salon. Her father felt ashamed that his daughter was working while he couldn't find a job. In his rage, he visited the salon, broke her equipment and left.

After all this hardship and sadness, Enam was plotting how to take revenge on her former husband. She felt that he was the cause of all this pain and hardship. Even in a state of deep bitterness and pain, Enam chose to participate in our Character Development training.

After listening to real life testimonies about the power of forgiveness, Enam courageously chose to forgive her former husband releasing her from the cycle of anger, rage, and revenge. While she won't forget all the pain, she now realizes that unforgiveness is a prison that holds the person captive. After forgiving, Enam no longer desires to take revenge and now even prays for her former husband. She has a new hope walking forward in the freedom of being forgiven and extending forgiveness even to those who have caused so much hurt. •

PAKISTAN

Building bridges through education

Sher Azam is a community leader who supports public projects among the shepherd people in remote villages in northern Pakistan, including making improvements to education in village schools.

“My family has lived here in this village for the last 70 years,” he explains. “We have been considered the least important people in this valley. My community is very poor and struggles for everyday survival. I have never seen anyone coming and helping us.

“When I met the leadership of your group many years ago I was not so sure that they would keep working with us and

“Those people who hated education are now loving it.”

for my community. After a few years I realise that they are different people and they fulfill their promises. Today I can see a big change in my community. Those people who hated education are now loving it. They are no longer hesitating to send their kids to school. Now the young generation is different from the old generation — everyone supports education.” •



6

TOUCH POINT

SPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Operation Mercy has worked to develop sport programmes that support the inclusion of people with disabilities and help male refugees to manage their behaviour and families. The programmes also help young people to gain confidence and to have the mindset to undertake vocational training or studies in order to avoid unemployment.

A sport and development programme is currently being run in Jordan, but it is also a subcomponent in many community health and community-based rehabilitation programmes in many of the other countries where we work.



Countries

Jordan and North Macedonia
(and subcomponents of
projects in Iraq, Kazakhstan,
and Kyrgyzstan)



Project figures

Number of projects	2
Total expenses	€ 54,881



Participants/country

Jordan	74
North Macedonia	20
Total	94

JORDAN

Solidarity among men

Hamza began participating in the Keystone Project for the opportunity to exercise with other men. In addition to the exercise, the unique opportunity to build relationships among participants continued to compel him to come, and after completing the programme, Hamza interviewed to become a coach and now leads his own sessions.

Sessions open with a time of sharing and learning before the workout class. Hamza encourages participants to share “even their griefs” with each other. This openness helps participants engage with, and support, one another.

“Everyone has faced different challenges in their lives,” Hamza says. “If one of



us cannot walk through one of these challenges, a [fellow] participant can help him overcome this challenge. Because the men take risks to open up, after just three months together, we began to have a brotherly connection to each other.”

While it wouldn't be obvious now, Hamza explains that the first gathering was difficult for him as a coach. “There was tension and stress,” he says. “I was a new person to them. Because of this, we would always start by joking around, and I would open by giving a personal example.”

Hamza discovered that his openness to share his own faults and challenges encouraged the group to join in.

Within the Keystone sessions there is a depth of solidarity relationally, emotionally, and physically amongst the men. This solidarity expresses the power of living “shoulder to shoulder” as they pursue health and community thriving. •

NORTH MACEDONIA

Underdogs

We just came back from our second interschool football match. This time, it was an 8-3 loss, but better than the 5-1 defeat we received the last time. Our Operation Mercy Eagles could have scored four more goals easily, the coach said, and the players are growing in confidence.

They come from the poorest part of the city where many don't have contacts or cash for equipment or fees to allow them to play with the formal clubs in the north of the city. This neighbourhood is marked by high levels of unemployment and social problems.

Operation Mercy's football project works in partnership with a local school with a wider opportunity to play matches with surrounding schools in the neighbourhood. The boys are aged 12 to 13 and have never had any previous opportunity to play soccer with a trainer. The school helped identify the 20 boys by their grades, believing that the low grades were only an indication of the difficult circumstance of the parents — not an indication of their intelligence. Operation Mercy is wanting to locate those who are also left out because they are perhaps carrying too much weight or are keen but not considered sporty enough or have just

Mirusha lives locally and works with Operation Mercy as part of the coaching staff.

not had any opportunity. Operation Mercy aims to instil confidence, to recognise the God-given value of some that no-one else recognises, and to invest in those who could not get any coaching, as well as to instil respect for each other. There are no losers on this team. Our boys are the underdogs, but they are going to be winners. Some are coming into their third year now and are ranked amongst the Eagles veterans.

Mirusha lives locally and works with Operation Mercy as part of the coaching staff. She is a kind of 'Football Aunty' to the boys. "Football was not my sport, but



“I already see the difference on their faces and their language improves. They stop putting the others down, they can say sorry and show respect.”

everyone wants to play now. I want to get these kids away from the bad roads, from knives, drugs and later unemployment,” she explains. “I am here so that our youth will not be lost. Some kids here do not have their fathers at home. Mothers are glad that they know where their sons are after school. Coming to us, I already see the difference on their faces and their language improves. They stop putting the others down, they can say sorry and show respect.

“When we have the breaks in the training programme, some of the boys catch me and want to talk about how things are

going at home. This opportunity means a lot, to know you are involved in their lives. The kids have a place to talk about what is going on in their lives.”

Mirusha also has a dream for Operation Mercy to take another step to offer some vocational skill to the teenagers. Operation Mercy already offers sewing training to girls and Mirusha would love to see that extended to offering barber training for the boys.

Football training, which is part of the youth dimension of the STEP programme, aims at three- to five- year

outcomes. STEP is Operation Mercy's Skills, Training, Empowerment and Practice (STEP) programme. The aim is for young people to gain confidence, to have the mindset to undertake vocational training or studies, and to avoid unemployment. The outcome is to see growing numbers of young people aged 15-24 in training, education or employment, following their STEP participation. •

PART THREE:

PARTNERS AND NEW INITIATIVES

NEW INITIATIVES

Türkiye

In our last report we shared about the relief initiatives after the devastating earthquake in the east of Türkiye in 2023. In January 2024, our International Director was invited to a meeting with the local government to discuss the registration of Operation Mercy in Türkiye to facilitate the transition from relief to rehabilitation and community development in the affected communities.

We appointed a representative for Türkiye and formed a team to work on the registration and first level of community engagement and assessment for future projects.

The process of registration is taking longer than expected, but we believe it to now be in the final stage. Plans for the first projects are ready and an onsite visit by the programme team will happen in the near future.

We will keep you informed via our webpage and social media of any new developments in 2025! •

NEW INITIATIVES

Sahel Region

Due to our own limitations in fundraising and project consulting, this region took a back seat in 2024.

We continue to watch developments closely and we regularly communicate with potential partners in Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad. We do not yet know whether we will embark on any partnerships in 2025.

Please contact us if you have an interest in supporting our team or projects in this area so we can involve you in the process as we grow our capacity to engage in this very important region. •



OUR PARTNERS

Dozens of organisations and hundreds of individuals partner with Operation Mercy each year. Besides funds, our partners provide expertise, material goods and free or discounted services.

ORGANISATIONAL PARTNERS

Allegro Organizational Solutions

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