

**PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

## **MERCY MALAYSIA NEEDS ASSESSMENT TEAM FOUND CRITICAL UNMET NEEDS IN SYRIAN REFUGEE CAMPS OF LEBANON**

### **MERCY Malaysia appeals for support for the Syrian Winter Relief Fund**

**KUALA LUMPUR, OCTOBER 26, 2015** – Critical basic and healthcare needs are urgently required in the Syrian Refugee camps of Bekaa Valley, Lebanon. MERCY Malaysia's Needs Assessment Team that has just returned from Lebanon visited six (6) camps there and found deplorable conditions in some of the camps. Critical basic needs from the displaced Syrians include winter kits (blankets, warm clothing), hygiene kits, food and healthcare services. While in Bekaa Valley, MERCY Malaysia distributed aid in the form of blankets and food baskets worth USD\$ 15,645 to two-hundred and ten (210) families. Additionally, MERCY Malaysia also distributed medical supplies worth USD\$ 10,000 to five medical centres there. Similar aids were also distributed to Palestinian refugees that fled Syria due to the war amounting to USD\$ 25,000. The total amount spent in Bekaa Valley both for medical supplies and humanitarian aid was USD\$ 50,645.

Each refugee camp housed between 200 to 4,000 refugees, with a total of twenty-one (21) camps altogether located in Bekaa Valley. According to the UNHCR, Bekaa Valley hosts Lebanon's largest official border crossing with Syria in Masnaa. Presently there are 373,429 registered number of refugees in Bekaa governorate alone (30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2015, UNHCR report). Bekaa Valley has also received the highest number of refugees in Lebanon and possesses the highest number of poor refugee families (54.5%) who live in sub-standard shelters.

The Syrian refugee crisis which stems from the ongoing armed conflict within the region began in the early spring of 2011 and has since changed the geo-political landscape of the region. The civil unrest which was initially between President Bashar al-Assad's government and rebel fighters has since been complicated even further with the rise of more groups like IS, in the region.

As a result, millions of civilians have been displaced from the country – many of which have ended up in overcrowded refugee camps and live under deplorable conditions. Humanitarian needs in Syria have increased twelve fold since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, with 12.2 million in need of humanitarian assistance, including 7.6 million Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and more than 5.6 million children in



need of assistance. An estimated 4.8 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in hard to reach areas and locations.

Just last year, MERCY Malaysia was able to aid fifty Syrian families with an immediate need of basic winter kits. The families identified were those that had lost the head of the family or were now arrivals to Jarash in Jordan in search of better lives.

“MERCY Malaysia has been responding to the Syrian crisis since it began in 2011. The crisis has escalated to an unimaginable extent, but nonetheless we will not falter in our efforts to garner support and raise awareness in providing humanitarian aid to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees, especially now with winter approaching,” said YBhg. Dato’ Dr Ahmad Faizal Mohd Perdaus, MERCY Malaysia’s President.

Here we appeal to every good hearted Malaysian to help us help those in critical need of help. Evidently, the Syrian crisis sees no conclusion anytime soon - however, we at MERCY Malaysia will not tire in providing help where needed.

To donate, please visit our website at [www.mercy.org.my](http://www.mercy.org.my) and click on “I Want To Donate” for the **Syrian Winter Relief Fund**. The Syrian Winter Relief Fund was launched by HRH Sultan Nazrin Shah of Perak at MERCY Malaysia’s Annual Fundraising Dinner, 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2015. For further information, you may also follow us on our Facebook and Twitter social media pages.

**For more information, please contact:**

Rianaa @ Nur Shereen , Head of Communications & Strategic Engagement  
E: [shereen@mercy.org.my](mailto:shereen@mercy.org.my) , 019-379 2875

Jillian Louis, Communications Officer  
E: [jillian@mercy.org.my](mailto:jillian@mercy.org.my) , 019-228 3634

Adam Azhar, Communications Assistant  
E: [adamazhar@mercy.org.my](mailto:adamazhar@mercy.org.my) , 019-311 6174

**About MERCY Malaysia**

MERCY Malaysia is a non-profit organisation focusing on providing medical relief, sustainable health-related development and risk reduction activities for vulnerable communities in both crisis and non-crisis situations. MERCY Malaysia recognises the value of working with partners and volunteers as well as providing opportunities for individuals to serve with professionalism. We uphold the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief and hold ourselves accountable to our donors and beneficiaries. As a non-profit organisation, MERCY Malaysia relies solely on funding and donations from organisations and generous individuals to continue our services to provide humanitarian assistance to our beneficiaries. For more information, please visit [www.mercy.org.my](http://www.mercy.org.my).



**Malaysian Medical Relief Society** (Reg. No. 1155)

No.4, Jalan Langgak Golf, Off Jalan Tun Razak,  
55000 Kuala Lumpur.

☎ +603 2142 2007    📠 +603 2142 1992

✉ info@mercy.org.my    🌐 [www.mercy.org.my](http://www.mercy.org.my)

### **How is MERCY Malaysia funded?**

To ensure independence and impartiality, MERCY Malaysia relies on donations from the general public for financial support. A portion of our income is obtained from institutional donors, individual government grants and other international organizations, which are given on project basis. MERCY Malaysia spends 80% of its income in carrying out its relief operations and support.

### **Important Note to Media: Usage of Wordmark MERCY Malaysia**

In order to avoid confusion with other organisation(s) that uses “Mercy” as the organisation’s name or part of the organisation’s name, please take note that in addressing the name of our organisation, the wordmark for MERCY Malaysia is with capitalised “MERCY”, followed by the word “Malaysia”. When describing the organisation, the term “MERCY Malaysia” must always be used in full, and should not be partially referred to as “MERCY”, or “Mercy”. Thank you for your cooperation.



## COUNTRY FACTSHEET: SYRIA

### Background:

The Syrian refugee crisis stems from the ongoing armed conflict within the region. The civil unrest began in the early spring of 2011 which has since changed the geo-political landscape of the region.

The civil unrest which was initially between President Bashar al-Assad's government and rebel fighters has since been complicated even further with the rise of more groups like IS, in the region.

As a result, millions of civilians have been displaced from the country choosing to cross the Mediterranean into Europe in search for safety and security. The demand for this journey has resulted in the influx of human trafficking between the continents and has contributed to thousands of deaths by drowning – the most recent being the case of Alan and Ghalib Kurdi, brothers who drowned trying while being smuggled into Europe.

Those who cannot afford to make the journey are forced into refugee camps around the region. As of last week, there have been reports of children being killed at these camps prompting questions pertaining the safety levels of these camps. Furthermore, with winter around the corner aid organisations are struggling to provide adequate shelter to the refugees against the cold.

### Highlights:\*

- 12.2 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance – a sharp increase of 1220 % since the beginning of the of conflict.
- 4.1 million people have fled the country since the conflict erupted – and the situation shows no sign this number will decrease any time soon.
- 7.1 million people have been internally displaced.
- The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)states that the Strategic Response Plan (SRP) is underfunded by 66.1%.
- Children affected by the Syrian conflict are at risk of becoming ill, malnourished, abused, or exploited. Millions have been forced to quit school.

- Aid providers have highlighted the increasing incidence of severe poverty.
- Access to healthcare services have been disrupted due to lack of funds and the volatile situation of the region. There have been instances where organisations have been barred entry by authorities.

\*(information from UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs OCHA)

## United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) September 2015 Reports

### Refugees falling further into poverty

Notwithstanding the assistance being provided by UNHCR, other humanitarian partners, and host governments, refugees are becoming more vulnerable and slipping further into poverty. For example, 86 percent of refugees living outside of camps in Jordan are now living below the poverty line, while in Lebanon 70 per cent of Syrian refugee households live far below the national poverty line – up from 50 per cent in 2014. Refugee families are struggling to access or pay for essential services such as education, health care, rent, water and sanitation. Vulnerable refugee families are increasingly resorting to negative coping mechanisms, with practices such as child labour, begging and early marriage on the rise.

### Consequences of Underfunding

UNHCR urgently needs almost USD 1 billion dollars to meet the needs of Syrian refugees and IDPs. If further funding is not received, levels of vulnerability and poverty will continue to rise, and refugees and IDPs will miss out on services they desperately need. Some of impacts of a lack of funding include:

- Thousands of women and children in Lebanon will not benefit from medical, emotional or legal support to protect them from early marriage, sexual harassment and negative coping strategies;
- In Jordan, 30,000 families will miss out on cash assistance to help them through the winter, while 73,000 families will miss out in Lebanon, and 16,000 will miss out in Iraq;
- In Turkey, 17,000 families will not receive winter clothes and other in-kind winter assistance;
- In Egypt, refugees detained for attempting illegal departure will remain in detention for prolonged periods with little or no humanitarian and legal assistance;
- Inside Syria, the provision of core relief items and additional winter items such as fuel (including through cross border operations from Turkey and Jordan) would be significantly reduced. The pace



of distribution in Syria has already decreased from 20,000 to 8,000 family kits per week, and this will have to further decrease should additional funds not become available.