

GIVE GOOD WATER, GIVE LIFE



BABIES ARE HEALTHY WITH CLEAN WATER

Her name could have been Mary but it is not. She lives in the south of Gaza not that far from Bethlehem. She has a new baby but there is not enough food. The baby girl named Niveen is not growing well. Niveen's mother knows she needs help, or she will die. She has no money and life is marked by suffering and misery.

Desperate for her daughter now 18 months old, she takes Niveen to the medical clinic at Rafah run by the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees even though she has no money.

“I can hardly find the food to feed my family. I try to cope by cooking cheap food or use the rice and lentils from the government rations. I can’t afford to buy nutritious food. I feel guilty because my inappropriate feeding practices contributed to her illness,” says her mother.

The doctor said Niveen was suffering from severe malnutrition and anaemia and prescribed various medications and vitamins. Her mother was grateful for the help and the opportunity to learn about better nutrition.

The family of seven live in a very poor neighbourhood. Their house has one room, a small hall and a tiny area used as a kitchen. A traditional toilet is attached to the house which is hot in the sun, cold in the winter and leaks in the rain. They have an old table and fridge but no other furniture. Once her father worked as a casual labourer but like many men in Gaza now has no work – unemployment is close to 46.7%. They depend on a small government pension, food rations and the occasional assistance from Niveen’s grandfather. Water is in short supply.

“By the fourth visit, the nurse informed me that my child’s weight and haemoglobin had returned to normal. I was so happy. I will continue to visit the clinic until my daughter reaches the age of six years,” she concludes.

Life is not easy for many Palestinian and Syrian refugees. Years of conflict and few opportunities have pushed them to the limits of their resourcefulness. Mothers face each day with dread as they calculate how to manage the shrinking rations and emergency assistance they get. There are few opportunities for employment and living conditions are cramped. Malnutrition is rising and many more children have been traumatised by their experiences. The need is clear.

Note: The images are not of Niveen and her mother who were happy to share their story but not their photos.





DSPR

For seventy years, the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) has been there for refugees and local communities. Started by local churches working together in Galilee, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank to respond to the needs of the first refugees, DSPR now focuses on education, healthcare and emergency assistance. Their services are highly valued for the way they work in very difficult environments.

In Gaza the local committee runs three primary health clinics and a vocational training centre.

Last year DSPR Gaza saw 13,138 children at their well-baby clinics. When they first arrive, the youngsters are given a drink supplement. The children are weighed and measured. Their haemoglobin checked. Mothers may receive health education and children with health needs are treated. Many are suffering from malnutrition and staff say the continuing conflict is causing acute levels of psychosocial distress. DSPR runs a vocational training programme and provides emergency assistance as funds allow.

The population of Gaza continues to swell as poverty increases. The United Nations says that by next year, the territory could become uninhabitable – 97% of the water is not safe to drink, adding to a mother's worry.

Two primary care health clinics are run by DSPR Jordan with a specific focus on mother and baby health. Local medical professionals in Jordan volunteer for Free Medical Days organised by DSPR Jordan, an opportunity for refugees to receive medical care and where possible get medicine and other support. CWS has been able to provide funding for medical referrals from time to time. DSPR Jordan runs a health education programme, where they train women leaders of small groups to pass on knowledge and to support each other in a peer to peer process.

In the West Bank, much of the work focused on improving water supply and livelihoods. Achieving success is not straightforward. Permits are almost impossible to obtain, services can be cut off without notice, and conflict frequently erupts with the new settlers or military. The situation for most continues to deteriorate.

With your help young Palestinian and Syrian refugee mothers will have safe water for their families and access to the good health care they need.



Photos: ACT Alliance/ Paul Jeffrey, DSPR and Trish Murray

Give Good Water, Give Life. **Donate now to the Christmas Appeal**

The need is clear – give water for Christmas, the essence of survival.

