

PARTNERSHIP



— WINTER 2013 —



EVERY
CHILD
COUNTS

CHILDREN IN NEED: *SPECIAL EDITION*

ALSO INSIDE:

SCARS & SMILES: A PHOTO ESSAY OF SYRIAN REFUGEE CHILDREN

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH JUNAID JAMSHED



ABOVE: Qader, 13, from Yatta in Hebron, Palestine. His family raises sheep and earns income through IRUSA's family sponsorship program.



Assalamu Alaikum == GREETINGS OF PEACE ==

I met a Syrian refugee child who was too afraid to give me his name in Jordan. He had been shot in the head during violence that broke out in Syria.

He wasn't the only child refugee at the camp—There were so many children at the camp living in some of the harshest conditions I've ever seen.

As a Muslim, a parent and a human being, I have to take a stand for children all over the world who are suffering through these very precious years of their lives.

That's why we've dedicated this edition of Islamic Relief USA's Partnership Magazine to children in need. Islamic Relief has been working hard for children and families for more than a decade. This special edition of Partnership highlights some of the achievements and pursuits we've had in the past year geared towards vulnerable children.

And alhamdulillah, we're on the right track. In 2011, the United Nations reported that 14,000 fewer children died each day than in 1990. Thanks to supporters like you, IRUSA is proud to say that we've helped make a difference. Thanks to you, we've been a helping hand in lowering child mortality rates with programs and projects focused on meeting the needs of children and mothers, promoting education and opportunities for them, and advocating for their rights.

We want to keep the trend positive. There's so much more work to be done.

My dear friend, we need your help.

We are continuing to push for the well-being of vulnerable children, their right to live with dignity and their right to live with their needs met.

I hope that you will be inspired by the children that we've been able to help and the projects we've highlighted for you here, in this edition of Partnership Magazine. I hope that you continue to take a stand for children who need you. We're so thankful you're working with us.

Insha'Allah, together, we can continue to work hard for our children. Let's show them that in this world they are cared for and loved so that one day, they may do the same.

Ameen.

JazakAllah khair.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Abed Ayoub'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A' and 'A'.

Abed Ayoub
Chief Executive Officer
Islamic Relief USA

CONTENTS

8. SCARS & SMILES: SYRIAN CHILD REFUGEES 14. CHILDREN IN NEED
16. HUNGER 20. ILLITERACY 24. DISEASE & POOR SANITATION
28. CLEAN WATER IN NIGER 30. ORPHANS 34. FESTIVAL FOR ORPHANS IN PALESTINE
36. IRUSA IN THE NEWS 38. SONGS FOR THE CHILDREN WITH JUNAID JAMSHED
40. HELPING AT HOME 42. HURRICANE SANDY 44. 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Creative Director and Photo Editor: Ridwan Adhami

Managing Editor: Nada Shawish

Contributing Writers: Reem El-Khatib, Nabeela Naeem, and Nada Shawish

Copy Editor: Reem El-Khatib

Designers: Ridwan Adhami, Zainab Hassan and Ala Yaktieen

Photographers: Ridwan Adhami, Bilal Aslam, Nabeelah Naeem, and Adam Scarth

Programs: Sannia Qazi and Bilal Aslam

Thank you to all who contributed imagery and content from around the world.

Photographs © Islamic Relief



ABOVE: Kenyan children play in a field in Nairobi.

SCARS & SMILES: SYRIA

FACES AND STORIES OF CHILD REFUGEES

WORDS BY NADA SHAWISH | IMAGES BY RIDWAN ADHAMI

There is something incredibly inspiring about children. They share a common thread of hope that you can see in their eyes, even when those eyes are surrounded by scars, both the physical ones that freckle the skin and disable the body, and those deep ones that torment the heart and torture the mind.



ABOVE: As a doctor tapped at Shahad's paralyzed legs at a makeshift camp in a mosque in Lebanon, she peered over her aunts shoulder directly into the camera. She didn't flinch, not even as the doctor grazed over the scars that dented her small back—scars from the bullet that had entered her through her shoulder and shattered in her lower spine. She's two, her interest is with the camera, and although she was shy, her eyes held us still.



ABOVE: On a mountain of trash, in a leather factory, Mustafa's scars are less obvious. The freckles on his face are a consequence of his blood condition, which hadn't been properly treated since he fled Syria. He and his family are refugees, with no paperwork, and no way to get proper care. With no electricity, no clean water, and with the fumes of formaldehyde and rotted sheep waste all around them, Mustafa let us move around him to assess the difficulty of it all. He didn't flinch. His eyes invested in the barrel of the camera, he too held us with them. He didn't need words.



ABOVE: The stories of brutality and destruction of the Syrian conflict were common. The stories were so similar, that we became numb—numb to the brutality faced by so many little bodies, so many young children who were supposed to have so much life ahead of them to look forward to. The Syrian children in Zaatari camp were covered in dust, their hair whitened, their eyelashes and eyebrows coated with powder.



ABOVE: It aged them. Living in the dust had cracked their eyes and tore at their skin. The real damage was being done inside their small lungs. The coughing and wheezing from the dust made children collapse in the midst of playing. Even sitting was difficult. Many adults claimed that it was the children that kept them strong. Their children had endured so much already, and it was their children that kept them living. In their children they saw better days. It was hard to understand why children like these should have to grow old so quickly, why they had to be symbols of perseverance and hope through this violence.



ABOVE: They had fled Syria to find a haven, a place to sleep safely, somewhere away from bullets and blood, somewhere with some relief. At Zaatari and other border camps like it, we heard some say in whisper that these children came here to die.

But they were still very much alive. The younger children sustained some semblance of childhood in peace signs, play, smiles and an eagerness to take a good picture. At moments they just looked like happy kids, roughhousing in the dirt. Death seemed as it should be, far away.



ABOVE: Yousef said he felt far away from the conflict while playing soccer, a game he could take with him to any home. Some of the scars in his cheeks came from surviving childhood bumps and bruises, but like the children of Zataari camp, most came from shrapnel and stray metal from explosions raining over him and his brother in Syria. But Yousef's smile was light, unburdened by all that was going on around him. His eyes lit up talking about soccer: running fast, jumping high, and scoring goals.



ABOVE: Yousef and his family were vibrant, they insisted on carrying on, even in the tiny flat they shared with three other families ... Babies were being born, sisters were getting married, and they carried with them a sense of home.

ABOVE: The Syrian children we met had seen so much violence, but mostly said very little. Their parents or relatives or neighbors told us how they survived bullet wounds, brutal beatings, thirst and hunger, how cleverly they hid, how they risked their lives, how strong they were through their losses, how they never slept and how they trekked many miles to find a safe place.

But we found the more profound stories without words, in the simple presence of the children, just being among them. We found their stories in their scars and smiles. These children reminded us of the child who is still inside of us, how strong and uninhibited that spirit was once, and at times, still is. Helping these children carry on, to make their lives easier, to give them a chance to live their lives is to support a mission that extends so far beyond the borders and boundaries that the world is imposing on them. They are not just Syrian refugee children, they are our children too. We have to show them that there is kindness outside of their immediate world, that we care, that we recognize the child in them, so that one day, they will too.



EVERY CHILD COUNTS

Children are the most vulnerable in communities where poverty, disease, conflict and violence are rampant. So many children around the world are left to fend for themselves, and unfortunately, too many become victims of the world's dangers—things that we safeguard our own children from every day.

We can help keep children out of danger. We can help prevent disease, get children proper nutrition and care, and ensure they have a good education. Solutions are possible. When children are given the right tools, care, and opportunities, they can live and grow with dignity and realize their full potential.



ABOVE: Young boy waiting for his turn at the water pump in Siliga camp in Mogadishu, Somalia.

HUNGER



HUNGER IS LINKED TO MORE THAN HALF OF CHILD DEATHS WORLDWIDE.

Poor nutrition is linked to more than a third of under-five deaths globally.

Even more children worldwide suffer from “hidden hunger.” They lack vital nutrients and have deficiencies in the key vitamins they need to develop into healthy adults. Without proper nutrition from foods like vegetables and fruits, fish and meats, and other items that are often expensive and hard to get, many children are stunted, are more likely to become blind, have lower IQ, and are more likely to die before maturity.

“Well-nourished children perform better in school, grow into healthy adults and in turn give their children a better start in life. Well-nourished women face fewer risks during pregnancy and childbirth, and their children set off on firmer developmental paths, both physically and mentally.” –UNICEF

IN 2011, AN ESTIMATED 165 MILLION CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE WORLDWIDE WERE STUNTED, A 35% DECREASE FROM AN ESTIMATED 253 MILLION SIMILAR CHILDREN IN 1990.



Q&A WITH DR. NABIL SHABAYTA, IR-LEBANON

Q: DOES MALNUTRITION IMPAIR BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT?

Dr. Nabil: The answer is yes. Poor nutrition causes deficiencies in vital vitamins and nutrients. These deficiencies stunt physical growth and hinder body function and brain development. The body may be able to survive with poor nutrition, and often will for some time, but when nutrition is compromised, the body will use whatever nutrition sources it gets to keep it alive at minimum, and will disable many of the higher functions and processes that the body needs to reach its full potential.

Q: DO ONLY SEVERELY MALNOURISHED CHILDREN SUFFER THE EFFECTS OF MALNUTRITION?

Dr. Nabil: No. Young children especially need to be nourished in all of the necessary vitamins and minerals. Even less severe nutritional deficiencies could hinder cognitive development in infants and young children, and the signs will be visible in later developmental stages.

Q: AT WHAT AGE ARE INTERVENTIONS MORE LIKELY TO BE EFFECTIVE?

Dr. Nabil: The brain and body develop most rapidly between pregnancy and the age of four.

It's very important for infants and toddlers to have proper nutrition during this period of development in order to make sure the child will have a proper base to continue to grow into adulthood. The negative effects of malnutrition during this time tend to be permanent, but nutritional interventions during this time can improve the child's quality of life dramatically and in the long term.

Q: ARE THE EFFECTS OF MALNUTRITION REVERSIBLE?

Dr. Nabil: There is substantial evidence that shows significant improvements can be made even in severely malnourished children, if the right steps are taken at a young age to satisfy their nutritional and psychosocial needs. The longer that delays in development remain uncorrected, the greater the chance of the effects of malnutrition being permanent. In developing countries, where many children don't receive proper nutrition, or where interventions to overcome deficiencies at an early age are unavailable, there is a greater chance that effects of malnutrition will be permanent. The importance of interventions for young children cannot be stressed enough. Providing nutritional supplements and improving access to nutritious food sources for infants, young children and mothers, and educating parents about the nutritional needs of children and mothers can help prevent and address malnutrition and its effects.



NUTRITION

SCHOOL LUNCHES FOR GAZA'S CHILDREN

More than 220,000 children are taught in United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) schools throughout the Gaza Strip. These children suffer losses that we would never dream of, and worse, their chance at a better life is constantly threatened by the violent world they live in. Many of these children go hungry at home because food is expensive and families can barely afford to keep a roof over their heads.

Children in Gaza endure continuous violence and suffer from extreme hunger when there's very little or no nutritious food to eat.

Since November 2012, Islamic Relief USA has partnered with UNRWA to help provide emergency food aid to schoolchildren in the Gaza Strip. With the help of our donors, IRUSA has been able to provide funding for daily supplementary food assistance distributed by UNRWA to 21,536 children during the school year.

With food in their bellies, these children can at least continue to focus on their studies, and will be strong enough to withstand the hardships they face each and every day living in Gaza.

Making sure children in Gaza and elsewhere have proper nutrition means they are given a chance to stay healthy and develop properly.



CHECHNYA

In Chechnya, years of conflict have made many mothers and fathers unable to care for their own children. So many children have become orphans overnight. Worse, job opportunities for single mothers and widows are hard to find: nearly 80% of these women have no reliable source of income, leaving too many children uncared for or alone.

IRUSA donor support helped build and open a bakery in one of Chechnya's poorest areas. Then, your funds helped staff the bakery with local women so that they could work and provide a reliable income for their families. Best of all, the bakery works hard to provide fresh baked goods to orphans and child rehabilitation centers in Chechnya so that fewer children are forced to survive without any food.

As the business expands, it can employ more people and help provide more children with a source of fresh food.

USA

Learning does not end when school lets out. Neither does the need for good nutrition.

Nearly 18 million students depend on free or reduced-price school lunches and breakfasts for nine months out of the year. That means that millions of children might go hungry during the summer. Islamic Relief USA has partnered with the USDA to help provide nutritious meals to children in low-income areas during the summer months through the summer food service program. This program has also been extended to provide food services throughout the year.

- The summer food service program serves meals with milk, meat, fruits, vegetables, and bread.
- All meals and snacks meet the USDA's nutrition standards.
- The food is free to children age 18 and younger.
- Meals are served at a supervised site near where the children live.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Palestinian boys sit among buildings destroyed in Gaza in 2012.

LEFT: Children ready to receive meals through the summer food service program.



ILLITERACY



Education is often expensive. Nearly a quarter of the earnings of low-income families in developing countries are needed to support their children's education. Sending their children to school is even more of a risk when there is no guarantee of a suitable career or income after they complete their education. Seventy-five million children of primary school age are not enrolled in school.

A white silhouette of a woman's head and shoulders in profile, facing right. Inside the silhouette, there is a white thought bubble containing text.

MORE THAN
200 MILLION
CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE
OF 5 DON'T REACH THEIR
FULL COGNITIVE CAPACITY.
A CONSISTENT AND PROPER
EDUCATION HELPS ENSURE THAT
CHILDREN DEVELOP TO THEIR
FULL POTENTIAL.

BELOW: Refugee boys go to school far from home at Rajo IDP School at the Siliga camp in Mogadishu, Somalia.

TWO-PRONGED APPROACH TO COMBATING POVERTY

Make sure children in need have the financial support to pursue a quality education.

Make sure training and educational opportunities are available to match job vacancies and business potential

(Source: United Nations)



EDUCATION

RIGHT:
Palestinian girl
at new school
within walking
distance of
her home in a
Bedouin camp,
Jenin.

NEW SCHOOLS, THE RIGHT TOOLS

It's proven that education is vital to getting people out of poverty. For children in impoverished communities, a healthy and safe learning environment not only helps children develop into productive adults, but also provides a safe space to eat, explore, play and grow. Building and renovating schools, improving learning opportunities and school curriculum and providing supplies, helps give children in need a chance at better opportunities in the future.

Islamic Relief USA has helped create a safe and healthy learning environment for students at eight schools in remote areas in the West Bank, Palestine. Students in these areas had been studying in overcrowded classrooms and poor physical infrastructure, with little to no supplies for the children to use, ventilation, or water access, and poor sanitation facilities. Worse, school facilities were not easily accessible to children—many had to walk long distances across busy highways just to get to class.

Now, more than 2,000 current students in the West Bank have a better place to play and learn including computer and science labs, new classrooms, playgrounds, and proper sanitation facilities. Better still, the schools will help provide a better education to incoming students in the future.



KENYA

When drought struck East Africa in 2011, tens of thousands of children lost their lives, and many more were displaced from their homes. These children, now refugees, have been uprooted not only from their homes, but also from their right to an education.

Nearly 450,000 people live in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya—and most of them are children. These children have already been out of school for some time, and if they miss too many years of proper primary education, they will fall permanently behind in their development and learning.

Islamic Relief USA is helping make sure the children of Dadaab camp stay in school, even though they are far from home. Five child-friendly schools have been built to accommodate 1,000 children living in Dadaab camp. The schools include proper restroom and sanitation facilities, and drinking water access for students and teachers. IRUSA is also helping to fund added curriculum for the schoolchildren on health and hygiene to help raise awareness on how to keep healthy as they learn.

AFGHANISTAN

Orphans in Afghanistan’s Khoog Khoo center live in poor conditions, without proper food, and worst of all, a poor education system. There isn’t enough money to improve the center’s conditions, so Islamic Relief has stepped in to help modernize education facilities. A total of 426 orphans now have access to new blackboards, desks, and supplies, and ten teachers have been trained in better teaching practices. Islamic Relief is also working to build a computer laboratory for the children and to improve living conditions with new bedding, pillows, mattresses, blankets, reading and bathing facilities and nutritious food three times a day.



Letter from Yousef Samir Ateeq, 11, fifth grade, Palestine:

In the name of Allah, most gracious and merciful, we, the individuals of fifth grade class A, would like to thank you very much for building these marvelous classes that we were wishing for. We thank you for helping us Islamic Relief, and we are wishing you all success in all your projects. Thank you!

DISEASE &
POOR SANITATION



1.2 MILLION
CHILDREN
UNDER THE
AGE OF

5

DIE FROM
DIARRHEA

“Unsafe water,
poor sanitation,
and unhygienic
conditions claim
many lives each
year ...”

–UNICEF



RECOMMENDATIONS IN HEALTH & SANITATION

Relieve poor living conditions: Overcrowded, hazardous and unsanitary living conditions are more likely to allow disease to spread. Poor living conditions are among the greatest violations of children's rights.

Improve access to medical care: Without proper immunization, outbreaks of preventable diseases are more likely and more difficult to treat. Simple check-ups, access to immunizations, pre-natal and post-natal care and access to emergency medical services and medicines help lower child mortality in impoverished communities where children are especially susceptible to ailments and disease.

Focus on age groups appropriately: Children who don't get the proper nutrition and care they need are permanently stunted. Youth who are alone and who don't have access to opportunities including education are more susceptible to life-threatening violence and hazardous work conditions.

Increase health awareness: Providing information on how diseases spread, the types of medical conditions people can be born with and can contract, and proper hygiene and personal health care has been proven to help communities stay healthy overall.

(Sources: United Nations and the Convention of the Rights of the Child)

HEALTH



EMERGENCY CARE SAVES LIVES

To protect their families, thousands of Syrian refugees have fled to neighboring countries, like Jordan. Many refugees arrived injured and in need of emergency medical care. So many of those injured are children and youth who have been shot or burned, traumatized, dehydrated and are malnourished. Islamic Relief emergency medical assistance to Syrian refugees has helped provide vital treatment for many, including children. Food and clothing distributions have helped make sure Syrian refugee families with children have basic necessities.

PAKISTAN

In Pakistan, part of Islamic Relief's Nowshera integrated village rehabilitation project helped provide health services to 2,563 mothers and children. Mothers were provided with pre-natal and post-natal care including necessary examinations for pregnant and lactating mothers, treatment of common ailments, immunizations, and routine medical tests to ensure the health of the mother and baby. Health education was also provided to ensure mothers were aware of the best way to take care of themselves and their children. Supplies were given to mothers at every stage of the process to make sure they had what they needed to have a healthy pregnancy, delivery and recovery experience.



SYRIA

He's only a teenager, but has faced more brutality than anyone his age should have to see.

When fighting broke out in his hometown in Syria, bullets and bombs turned buildings to rubble and started fires. People were stuck in their homes during Ramadan. They couldn't leave to get food for fear that heavy shelling would kill them.

Ghassim was trying to carry food to some of his neighbors who were starving and had small children. Sudden, heavy shelling rained over the houses, and shrapnel struck his back and arm.

He was lucky enough to have friends carry him to safety.

When Ghassim came to Jordan as a refugee, he desperately needed help. Islamic Relief donors helped Ghassim get emergency surgery to remove the damaging metal from his back and arm before infection could begin. Thanks to Islamic Relief donors like you, Ghassim is healing and has a better chance of surviving his injuries.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Syrian refugee boy receives gifts to brighten his day while recovering after emergency medical care in Jordan.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Ghassim, 18, recovers from emergency surgery to remove shrapnel from his back in Jordan.

CLEAN WATER IN NIGER

ERADICATING GUINEA WORM IN ABSA VILLAGE

IRUSA communications specialist Reem El-Khatib describes her experience in Niger's Absa village, where Islamic Relief Niger works to eradicate disease with clean water.

"Guinea worm," says 60-year-old Solei Musa, "we all had guinea worm." Guinea worm is one of the diseases that infested Absa village in Niger's Tillaberi district because of the adjacent river's water—the only water the 450 people in the village had access to, and it was full of bacteria and microbes, but it was the only affordable water they had.

"They would try to create their own filtration system, covering one bucket with a cloth, then pouring the water through to another bucket," says Islamic Relief Niger's Boubacar Koura. The village women would do this several times to get the cleanest possible water—despite their efforts, the water was still unsafe.

Access to clean water was so limited that almost everyone in the town had had a bout with a water-related illness: beyond guinea worm, they suffered from skin disorders, diarrhea and on. Because the children and women are always around the water, they are most susceptible: Children who accompany their mothers to the river beds play or bathe in the water, unaware of the dangers lurking around them. "Many of the children suffer from urine infections from doing this," says Boubacar.

But, with the installation of a borehole, Islamic Relief has helped protect the people of Absa village against the further spread of water-borne diseases.

"The borehole provides clean water," says 40-year-old Moukala Nohu, an Absa village resident. "It tastes good."

In order to determine where a borehole should be located, Islamic Relief conducts a geophysical survey. The survey provides three location options in a village, like Absa. "The first option provides 90% certainty that clean water will be abundant and available deep within the earth," says Boubacar. The other two locations are explored if the first one does not pan out.

In the case of Absa village, the best water was found just a few dozen meters outside the community entrance—and that is where the residents now go to collect their water. So, now, five-year old Maimuna and her two sisters, twins Hawa and Adama, head there to fill their buckets with water for the day. They hop off the donkey-drawn cart, place a bucket under the faucet and enthusiastically start jumping onto the foot pump. Their father looks on lovingly as his daughters giggle from the playfulness of it all. Who knew gathering water could be so fun? For the children, it now is.

"We can cook, clean, drink, provide for the animals," says Moukala.

"And it's been about five years since anyone in the village has suffered from guinea worm, including me" adds Solei.



MALI

In Mali, children in villages suffer without their basic needs met. Islamic Relief created a child friendly village that included a new water system, a school, and a medical center to give children in Mali a chance at a better life. All the elements of the child friendly village work together to provide a healthy, nourishing environment where children can live and grow, beginning with safe drinking water. With clean water in the village, the children have water to drink, but the village can also water gardens and satiate livestock that provide food. The food is cooked in the school cafeteria so children can have healthy, nutritious lunch to eat every day. Now, they can focus more on their studies and are strong enough to be productive in their communities.

PAKISTAN

A hygiene promotion campaign through the Community Livelihood Improvement project (CLIP) in Pakistan has given 803 school children in Bagh, Dhirkot and Forward Khauta education on better hygiene practices. The campaign has helped create awareness among schoolchildren about how diseases can spread through water, how to keep them clean and healthy, and how to keep water sources clean for their community.

As part of an effort to help make rural Pakistan better able to withstand floods, Islamic Relief's WASH project under the CLIP program has helped to rehabilitate and reconstruct drainage systems to prevent flooding, build latrines and sanitation facilities, install hand pumps for easy access to clean water, and provide water testing and treatment to prevent spread of disease through water sources. Hygiene sessions were held to educate community members on better ways to keep away illness and prevent disease.



ALONE



NEARLY
2.5 MILLION
PEOPLE ARE BOUGHT
AND SOLD AND
FORCED INTO LABOR.

SADLY, AN
ESTIMATED
22 TO 50
PERCENT
OF THEM
ARE
CHILDREN.

More than 143 million children around the world are orphans. So many of these children grow up without the support they need, and may be left alone. Some are forced to live and work in the streets, and beg for food. Too many children have to work just to survive and most of them are only able get dangerous or hazardous work that can harm them and their communities. These children often can't finish school, and they can't reach their full potential.

They have to fend for themselves.



ALONE

THIS PAGE: Tasneem, 3, benefits from IRUSA's orphan sponsorship in Palestine.

GIVING ORPHANS A CHANCE

In order to protect children from the dangers in our world, we first have to make sure they have the support they need.

Keeping an orphaned child in the care of a loving family member, relative or caregiver helps ensure that they can live and grow with an adult who can give them the love they need. Orphan sponsors help provide necessities like an education, food, shelter and medical care.

RECESS IS THERAPY FOR AN ORPHAN



The orphans at the Gvardeyskiy Rehabilitation Center in Chechnya have had a harsh childhood—many have been growing up without a safe place to play with other children. Islamic Relief understands how important it is for children to be children, and to have a place to run and play with others their age. That’s why Islamic Relief helped build a playground complex at the center: the playground includes swings, slides, a sports area, carousel, basketball hoop, seesaw, and more.

Imran is 10 years old and has been an orphan at the center since his father went missing during war in Chechnya. He was too little and doesn’t remember much about his father. He only remembers that life has been harsh since the war. The playground lets him get away from the hardships they face.

“You can ask all the children in the center and they will say that they all love to stay here. The new playground gives us fun every day. I don’t know how to tell you thank you for this present. Now the yard of our center is bright and not empty. A lot of children after us will play here too ... When I grow up I want to build a big beautiful house for my brothers and me, with the swings like these,” Imran said.





FESTIVAL FOR ORPHANS

A CHANCE TO JUST BE CHILDREN

IRUSA communications specialist Nada Shawish reports one way that IR-Palestine gives orphans hope, from Haddad Amusements in Jenin.

A giant tweety bird dances beside a clown in a carnival oasis in Jenin, Palestine. They're singing songs for five hundred orphans who are singing along with them, just five days before Eid festival. Tonight, these orphans will enjoy being children—the tables of food, lights, presents, games, and songs, and amusement park rides are all just for them.

Thousands of children have lost one or both parents in Palestine. With conflict, discrimination, and violence a normal part of daily life, they can't get the education they need or opportunities to improve their quality of life.

Traditionally, men are often breadwinners of Palestinian families, but many fathers pass away young from the stress of living in a place where they may have unsafe work, poor medical care, checkpoints, violence or a combination of these. When they're gone, their widows and children are left with little to nothing, and few opportunities to care for themselves. They lack the financial support to live stable and healthy lives.

And the children suffer most. Malnutrition and preventable diseases, lack of quality education and medical care, on top ongoing violence in their country, leave children permanently traumatized and underdeveloped into adulthood.

Islamic Relief Palestine's head of mission Abdualraheem Shawahneh describes the orphan situation in the Palestinian Territories as heartbreaking. "These orphans struggle each and every day," he says, "They worry about more than children should. They worry about whether they'll live to see tomorrow. They miss out on their childhood. We want to see the children live their childhood and we want to ensure they have the care they need to learn and grow. That is why we are here."

At Haddad Amusements on this night, long tables are lined up under tents with rows of empty chairs waiting for the children to have an iftar like they've never seen—all kinds of foods top the tables: lentil soups, hot beans and sautéed vegetables, salad with fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, mint and olive oil,



hummus, eggplant, potatoes and hot rice, with fresh baked chicken and warm pita bread.

Islamic Relief Palestine's Hadeel Sharqawi helps wrap presents for the orphans. She says this work gives these orphans an opportunity to get away from the hard life they live. "They are so young," she says, "they have spent too much of their lives suffering. Already, many know more loss than any adults have learned. It's so sad. And yet, we are trying to help them meet their basic needs so that they might have a chance. We're also here today trying to let them be children. We want them to play, have fun, and learn most importantly there is hope and kindness in the world so they might grow up to share this too. We want them to remember some happiness among the terrible things they've seen."

IRUSA donors sponsor more than 1,400 orphans in Palestine, providing enough financial support to living guardians of the children so they can then provide education, food, clothing, medical care, and shelter. More than this, IRUSA donors have helped support programs that reach beyond meeting the basic needs

of children—their support has helped build schools, playgrounds, and sanitation facilities; helped widows get training, supplies and financing to start their own businesses; and helped put on events like the orphans iftar and Eid festival to give orphans an opportunity to be as they should be: smiling, happy children.

As the orphans run from the amusement park courtyard to the food tables, we take our seats among them and prepare to break our fasts. Although we haven't had anything to eat or drink all day, their smiling faces and twinkling eyes make my colleagues and I feel full.

One little girl named Aya, age 7, anticipates the delicious food with wide, brown eyes. She's been an orphan since she was born, but on this special night she seems to forget any sadness she's seen. Opening her palms she makes a small prayer, "Allah thank you and thank my sponsor. I have new clothes and ice cream. I love you. Ameen."



PUBLIC AFFAIRS



Congressman Keith Ellison presents at Islamic Relief's Ramadan reception on Capitol Hill.

ISLAMIC RELIEF CEO ABED AYOUB APPOINTED TO SPEARHEAD JOINT COUNCIL FOR CHILD WELFARE

IRUSA CEO Abed Ayoub has been invited to be a member of the steering committee for the Joint Council on International Children's Services in 2013, a global coalition working to advance the overall well-being of vulnerable children and their right to live in permanent family care.

ISLAMIC RELIEF USA RECOGNIZED BY FEMA AT COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS AWARDS

IRUSA was awarded Honorable Mention at FEMA's 2012 Individual and Community Preparedness Awards for innovative practices and achievements in emergency preparedness.



Paulette Aniskoff, Director of Individual and Emergency Preparedness Division for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, noted that as emergency responders in 2012, Islamic Relief USA has helped make "our communities safer, stronger and better prepared to manage any emergency situation."

ISLAMIC RELIEF USA NAMED 2012 TOP-RATED NONPROFIT

IRUSA was recognized as a 2012 Top-Rated Award by GreatNonprofits, the leading provider of user reviews about nonprofit organizations. Less than 1% of eligible nonprofits have received this distinction, according to GreatNonprofits.

"We are gratified by Islamic Relief USA for its work," said Perla Ni, CEO of GreatNonprofits. "They deserve to be discovered by more donors and volunteers who are looking for a great nonprofit to support."



ISLAMIC RELIEF USA BECOMES MEMBER OF WASHINGTON GLOBAL HEALTH ALLIANCE

IRUSA has become a member of the Washington Global Health Alliance (WGHA), an organization which supports and advocates for Washington state's global health community bringing together experts in research, education, and training. WGHA connects participants in one of the world's most dynamic centers for global health innovation.

CAPITOL HILL SYRIA BRIEFING HELPS BRING ATTENTION TO PLIGHT OF REFUGEES

IRUSA hosted a Capitol Hill briefing on July 31, 2012, titled "Syria in Crisis: Refugees and the Challenges of the Humanitarian Responses." The event helped shed light on the ongoing plight of refugees who have fled violence in Syria.

ISLAMIC RELIEF USA HOSTS RAMADAN WELCOMING RECEPTION ON CAPITOL HILL

IRUSA hosted an interfaith Capitol Hill Reception on July 19, 2012, on the first evening of Ramadan. The event was co-hosted by Congressman Andre Carson and Congressman Keith Ellison to celebrate the occasion with American Muslim community members, government officials, interfaith leaders, and executives from leading humanitarian aid NGOs.

ISLAMIC RELIEF USA BECOMES MEMBER OF NATIONAL VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTERS

IRUSA has become a full voting member of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster in 2012. "VOAD is the leading national, non-governmental agency, that presides over disaster assistance organizations in the US," said William Lea, manager of IRUSA's Disaster Assistance Response Team. "Becoming a member of VOAD is recognition of IRUSA's successful disaster training and relief efforts."

ISLAMIC RELIEF USA CEO ABED AYOUB REAPPOINTED TO USAID ADVISORY BOARD

IRUSA's CEO Abed Ayoub was reappointed in 2012 to USAID's Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid (ACVFA) of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for a second two-year term. Throughout its existence, ACVFA has worked to strengthen the role of the voluntary sector in US humanitarian and development cooperation efforts. Mr. Ayoub served on the board since 2010, paving the way for IRUSA to provide the Islamic perspective on global aid and development to the US government.



Islamic Relief USA communications specialist Nabeela Naeem talks with Junaid Jamshed, one of the most influential Muslim artists in the world, to find out more about his participation in IRUSA's Songs for the Children tour. We're giving you a sneak peak of the exclusive interview here ... For the full interview, visit IRUSA.org.

Nabeelah: Why did you decide to participate in Islamic Relief USA's Songs for the Children tour?

Junaid: I did my first tour with Islamic Relief UK and my experience was very good. The programs were very well planned and organized professionally. There was very healthy audience participation as well.

Some of the programs that Islamic Relief has are really close to my heart, Songs for the Children is one of them. I strongly believe these missions that we do make a big difference. That is why I agreed to do this event here in the US.

Nabeelah: Where do you get your inspiration for your lyrics?

Junaid: See what happens is, because I move around among people, I get inspired by the people. I read the lifestyles of our Rasul (pbuh) and the Sahabah (companions of the Prophet) a lot. I read about the lifestyles of people who have done a lot for the people—of Muslims and non-Muslims [working] together.

I read something recently about Nelson Mandela and why he was such a respected man. You go to South Africa, Muslims and non-Muslims both have a lot of love for him. But why? I wanted to know, so I read about that.

And I read about Muslim scholars. So those things play slowly and gradually on my mind and inspire my lyrics. There is one very famous poet in Pakistan, who has passed away. His name is Dr. Iqbal. I am a great fan of Allama (doctor) Iqbal and I read his poetry a lot and I would say that his poetry is a great source of inspiration for me. These are the people who actually inspire me.

Then I think about all of this. Making music, creating lyrics comes very naturally to me. So then you sing the words that come to your mind from these inspirations and hope that people can relate to it.

Nabeelah: How has your music changed through your career?

Junaid: When I was first starting as a musician, I was a very nationalistic figure and I use to believe in doing a lot of national songs. I would always have a national song in the albums I did.

Now the canvas is bigger. Now the canvas is not just my country Pakistan, but the entire world.

Now the canvas is the entire ummah (Muslim nation). We are actually the ummah of Rasullah (pbuh). The Sahabah, with all of their efforts, created an ummah.

I get to meet people from all walks of life, from all different countries, from different backgrounds. I read nasheeds (Islamic songs) in English, in Arabic. I read nasheeds even in Bangla language. Now I don't just travel to meet people from my own country but people from the entire ummah.

My aim in times to come is not to just work with Muslims but to actually sing songs for everyone and sing songs that people all over the world can relate to.

Nabeelah: How are the events you do different from other events?

Junaid: I make sure the events I do have the element of entertainment that Allah (swt) and his Prophet (pbuh) permit. Having said that, I would also like to make sure they are contemporary and our children can actually relate to them. We touch on subjects, which are part of their daily lives, and subjects, which have morality in them—subjects which compel them directly or indirectly towards the obedience of Allah (swt). I would like to continue doing these programs for years to come.

Nabeelah: How do you manage spending time away from your family and work to help children in need?

Junaid: It is priority. You see, you have certain priorities in life. Allah (swt) by his grace has given you some ni'ma (blessing), some bounty. So the best way to be thankful to Allah (swt) is to use that bounty and ni'ma to bring the people of Allah (swt) close to Allah (swt).

I think Allah (swt) has given me the ni'ma of this voice, for which I use for Allah (swt) and his Prophet (pbuh) to read nasheeds. That is a certain kind of music, which is pleasing in the eyes of Allah (swt) and His Prophet (pbuh). And if people can start listening to it, I think that is a great service to the ummah. Keeping that in mind, that now has become a priority.

My wife obviously would like to have her husband right next to her. I keep telling her inshAllah we will be together in paradise. This world is not a place where people can be together forever. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't work. Sometimes she gets very upset and then I have to really go out of my way to please her. Sometimes it is hard but she carries on.

Nabeelah: What would you like to share with Islamic Relief donors?

Junaid: I would really like to thank them for their generosity. Obviously if they were not doing anything, it would be absolutely futile on our part to say or do anything. They are actually the stars of the show.

According to one of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh): "Whoever will give sadaqa, his wealth will increase."

I have never seen a generous man go bankrupt. Generosity always pays. Here Islamic Relief USA is giving an opportunity to all these people to donate in the path of Allah (swt). Wealth is something that is closer to the heart. One of the greatest tazkiya (purification) of the nafs (self) is to part with your money and give it to people that deserve it.

My message to all the donors is this: If Islamic Relief and other charities were not doing this charity work, donors might not have the opportunity to help such tremendous causes. I really would like to thank them for helping us in doing good deeds the way Allah (swt) asked us to.

To check out the full interview and other stories like this, VISIT US AT WWW.IRUSA.ORG.





HELPING AT HOME

VOLUNTEERING: A KEY INGREDIENT FOR GOOD DEEDS

Nabeelah Naeem shares her experience volunteering at Islamic Relief USA's Giving Grain Food Pantry located in the Islamic Heritage Museum in Washington, DC.

"You can put the pita bread in the oven," says Sara to the customer at the food pantry. "You can put the pita bread in the toaster," insists another volunteer who weighs the groceries. Each of the volunteers tries to convince Giving Grain Food Pantry customers to take some free pita bread and heat the bread the way they think is best.

Islamic Relief USA's Giving Grain Food Pantry brings together volunteers, staff and community members in an effort to provide food to many hard-working families in the DC area who can't make ends meet. For IRUSA volunteer Sara, the time she spends at the Pantry is as involved and personal as family recipes for baking bread.

Sara, who believes pita bread is best when baked in the oven, left her infant and toddler with her husband so that she could volunteer today. "It is especially difficult to find the time to help the community when you have kids," Sara says, but she managed to take time out from her busy schedule to give back, "You

might have kids and other responsibilities, but you need to realize that there are people who are less privileged than you. There are people who have to stand in line outside in the cold weather just to get food."

Because of the Giving Grain Food Pantry, many families who would otherwise have to skip meals can eat. On the first and third Saturdays of each month from 9 a.m. to noon, when the pantry is open for business, Sara spends time with other volunteers and the pantry's customers to not only provide food, but also to help foster a sense of family and community.

Even though bagging food and cleaning supplies might seem monotonous, the colorful bunch of volunteers and customers makes these small tasks fun and entertaining. Depending upon the amount of grocery items the food pantry has, customers receive a certain weight of groceries per family member, and the volunteers make sure all the pantry's customers get what they need.

"The more that people donate, the more groceries Islamic Relief can buy for the food pantry and the more food the customers can take. Your donation will help us keep our shelves stocked, and continue



ABOVE: IRUSA volunteers help customers get the food they need at the Giving Grain Food Pantry in Washington, DC.

to serve those community members who are struggling to feed their families,” says Islamic Relief USA’s Programs Coordinator, Minkailu Jalloh who manages the Giving Grain Food Pantry.

And the volunteers are happy to be busy with full shelves of food and many customers. It means they’ll have more of a chance to help people, form bonds, and feel like they’ve made friends in the process. About 100 to 150 customers come to the Giving Grain Food Pantry each day, and each of the volunteers do their part to make the experience warm and welcoming, while ensuring the pantry runs smoothly.

Some volunteers gather the customers’ information to help determine how much food they need. Other volunteers help customers find what they need. Some volunteers replenish the shelves with groceries and others weigh the groceries.

“It’s nice to see volunteers from all different backgrounds come together and sacrifice their Saturday morning sleep to help others,” says volunteer Afshan. The experience of volunteering at the Pantry has inspired Afshan to volunteer more in her community. “Many first generation immigrants feel the need to help back home rather than helping here domestically. Volunteering here made it clear for me that a lot of people in our own cities need help. Seeing that most of the volunteers are second generation immigrants shows that things are

changing,” says Afshan, as she bags groceries for customers.

Another volunteer, Ala, asks me a question to ask our readers, “Why is it that we ignore hadith that say that we need to help our neighbors? Our neighbors are our community and they take precedence,” she says. She thinks that the Giving Grain not only serves the community, but also gives people who want to volunteer an opportunity to do so right here in the United States, and it encourages community involvement.

Sara sees volunteering at the Giving Grain Food Pantry as an alternative to donating money, but just as valuable, “We should always be thankful for what we have. Allah can take anything away from us. I didn’t give money but I gave my time. Everyone’s resources are limited, but you have to make that sacrifice.”

All the volunteers agree, especially in the midst of the season of shopping and sales, a place to be able to give back is needed. At the Giving Grain everyone seems to benefit: volunteers gain a sense of balance and a spirit of cooperation and giving, while customers save money on their groceries, and get the assistance they need. Together, these ingredients for giving make up a recipe we hope gets passed on and on.

YOU CAN HELP TOO! JUST VISIT US AT WWW.IRUSA.ORG/GIVINGGRAIN.



HURRICANE SANDY RESPONSE

HELPING PICK UP THE PIECES

Hurricane Sandy hit the United State's East Coast on Oct. 28, 2012. This category 1 storm spanned some 1,000 miles in width, and pummeled several states along its path.

Islamic Relief's Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) responded to Hurricane Sandy by providing emergency shelter. DART managed two emergency shelters, in cooperation with the American Red Cross, located on Rutgers University's Livingston Campus in Piscataway Township, NJ. Each shelter housed 300 individuals who were evacuated from Atlantic City.

Shelter was provided for seven days, with the majority of individuals and families being placed in transitional housing. For three weekends after Hurricane Sandy, DART conducted home assessments in Union Beach and Jersey City, NJ, to determine which damaged houses were salvageable. For salvageable structures, "muck out" was performed by DART teams. They removed debris, damaged drywall, carpet, and flooring. Toward the close of 2012, DART partnered with New Jersey-based SMILES to provide food to impacted families in Wildwood and Plainfield, NJ. That effort continues.



IRUSA volunteers help with cleaning and repair efforts in New Jersey after Hurricane Sandy.



Yousef Abdullah, IRUSA's North East coordinator, talking to a Church of Latter-day Saints volunteer in Far Rockaway, NY.

1993



1993.1994.1995.1996.1997.1998.1999.2000.2001.2002.2003

20 YEARS, MILLIONS OF LIVES. THANK YOU.

2013



2003.2004.2005.2006.2007.2008.2009.2010.2011.2012.2013



**ISLAMIC RELIEF USA
IS CELEBRATING 20 YEARS
OF SERVICE TO HUMANITY**

ISLAMIC RELIEF USA

P.O. Box 22250, Alexandria, VA 22304 • 1.855.447.1001 • info@irusa.org

A 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization (Tax ID# 95-4453134)



**TEXT*
JOINIR
TO 50555**

JOIN IRUSA'S
MOBILE COMMUNITY
AND GET THE LATEST
UPDATES TO FIND OUT
HOW YOU CAN HELP.



IRUSA.ORG

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER WORLD.

LIKE US ON:



FOLLOW US ON:

