**Project Summary**

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| **Applicant Information** | The Center for Mind-Body Medicine |
| **Country/Location** | Palestine |
| **Project Title** | **Hope & Healing for Gaza** |
| **Project Summary** | **International Emergency Program**  Provide **$599,756.00** to provide evidence-based mental health and psychosocial services to Gaza’s most vulnerable children (with a focus on orphans and those with severe injuries), as well as to first responders, and other traumatized children and adults.  The Center for Mind-Body Medicine (CMBM) proposes to implement a large-scale, emergency trauma-healing initiative throughout Gaza. This proposal is a continuation and scaling up of activities that were successfully completed in the first 2 months of the 2023 war, largely funded by Islamic Relief USA.  CMBM’s SMART objective is to serve 66,180 civilians (roughly 50% children/youth and 50% adults) over 8 months (7 months of activities and 1 month to complete evaluation). Services will include Mind-Body Workshops, intensive Mind-Body Skills Groups, and in-person and digital support via phone calls, SMS texts, and multimedia content.  Proposed project deliverables:   * Emergency Mind-Body Self-Care Workshops (2100 planned (15 Faculty \* 5 Workshops/week \* 28 weeks)) for approximately 52,500 children, adolescents and adults, including orphans and first responders. Workshops provide participants with a base-line understanding of the science of trauma; an experience of practicing 2-3 powerful mind-body medicine techniques; and guidance in how to continue to use these skills themselves and with their families and friends. Workshops also provide participants with the opportunity to connect with one another, as well as with CMBM’s Faculty, facilitating an experience of mutual, social support that is so critical to addressing trauma. * Mind-Body Skills Groups (MBSGs) (210 planned (15 Faculty \* 2 Groups/month \* 7 months() for approximately 1,680 of the most traumatized children/adolescents and adults. MBSGs consist of 8 sessions, and provide a deeper level of trauma-relief healing. (Until the ceasefire is put into effect, CMBM is implementing abbreviated groups of 5 sessions, to account for regular movement among the population.) In MBSGs, participants learn 10-12 evidence-based self-care skills, while experiencing a deep, ongoing sense of social support. * One-on-one and group support, in-person and via phone/SMS for at least 12,000 additional individuals, many of whom have limited mobility or are otherwise unable to travel. CMBM will offer a wide spectrum of targeted support both via the phone (including a hotline) and in-person, ranging from basic Psychological First Aid for first responders and those who have just suffered major losses to more intensive, regular psychological support for participants with extensive needs, identified during workshops and groups. * Given the state of emergency, CMBM will also distribute dignity kits (consisting of food, hygiene products, and writing and drawing materials) to MBSG participants in greatest need of material support (approximately 1,000 kits, through a competitive bid process).   CMBM will continue and deepen its partnership with UNRWA. Until there is a ceasefire, activities will primarily take place in 15 UNRWA shelters and distribution centers, as well as remotely through phone and digital activities. CMBM has positioned its 15 Faculty members in 15 distinct shelters -- primarily in Rafah and the Middle Area -- allowing us to reach as many children and adults as possible while providing continuity of service coordination with UNRWA.  Programming will evolve as the security situation allows. As soon as it is possible to do so, CMBM will launch full-scale partnerships with 5 strategic partner organizations. We have confirmed plans to work with Islamic Relief Palestine to serve orphans and guardians throughout Gaza, as well as with the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) to serve first responders. Detail on partners is as follows:   * Islamic Relief Palestine has an established network of organizations serving orphans and guardians throughout Gaza. IRPAL is eager to connect CMBM with these partner organizations, and to help facilitate mind-body healing services for thousands of orphans and guardians across Gaza. * Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has urgently requested CMBM’s support to address trauma among its network of 6,000 first responders who are working heroically to serve the injured and distribute aid throughout the ongoing war. * CMBM is currently speaking with several other local Community Based Organizations, to determine which additional 3 partners can best help us serve those in the greatest need (e.g. those with amputations).   Partners will provide space for CMBM to implement activities, and coordination support to recruit children and adults most in need. CMBM will provide Mind-Body Workshops and Mind-Body Skills Groups for partner staff and volunteers as part of our agreements, supporting IRPAL staff, PRCS first responders, and other partner staff as they work tirelessly to address the humanitarian crisis that continues to unfold. |
| **Justification for Project** | Since October 7, 2023, more than 20,000 people in Gaza have been killed, an estimated 70% of whom are children and women. More than 50,000 have been injured. An estimated nearly 1.9 million people in Gaza - over 80% of the population - are internally displaced. With relentless bombing continuing throughout the region and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warning that the war will be “long” and “difficult,” there is no clarity about when the bombardment will cease. The psychological effects of this war are devastating, particularly coming on top of the ongoing siege, periodic conflicts, incursions, isolation, and violence that has severely impacted the psychological and physical health of families in Gaza for decades. As UNICEF’s Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa Adele Khodr stated "Many [children in Gaza] are living with the long-term psychological effects of constant exposure to violence.” In a screening that CMBM conducted of students at 10 schools in Khan Younis in 2021, 40% of the children already met the criteria for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.  When stress is overwhelming, it disrupts every physiological function and contributes in significant ways to every major psychological and physical disorder, including depression, anxiety, heart disease, cancer, immune disorders, and pain syndromes, as well as alcoholism and drug addiction. The impact of extreme and prolonged stress on children, called “toxic stress,” is particularly dangerous. Children who experience overwhelming adversity may have significant developmental challenges and face lifelong health struggles. Individuals with unaddressed trauma are also far more likely to abuse drugs and become involved in anti-social activity, including acts of violence.  In the current context of war, Gazan civilians desperately need an evidence-based, scalable MHPSS intervention to relieve population-wide stress, trauma, anxiety, despair, and depression – and they need it as soon as possible. The longer the trauma is left unaddressed, the more likely imbalances are to cause subsequent problems. Wherever possible, it is vitally important to address trauma as soon as possible to help ensure that it will not persist and cause chronic problems.  CMBM is uniquely well-equipped to help Gazans cope with the trauma of the most recent atrocities in the region: airstrikes and bombing; mass displacement; a demolished healthcare system; fear and confusion; and immense grief and anger over the loss of loved ones that are tragic realities of today. Over 18 years, CMBM’s Gaza team has trained 1,500 Gazans in its evidence-based Mind-Body Skills techniques. They in turn have brought this approach to more than 296,000 children and adults with great success. The impact has been profound. For instance, CMBM’s 2011 study published in the International Journal of Stress Management showed that 90% of children and adolescents in Gaza who participated in CMBM’s 10-session MBSGs no longer qualified for the diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and had significant decreases in depression and hopelessness, with gains maintained at 7-month follow up. More recently, CMBM’s 2019 comprehensive pilot program of stress and trauma healing at 5 Ministry of Education schools in Khan Yunis decreased violence among students by 54%.  **Project Foundation - Currently Underway**  Over the past two months, thanks in large part to generous support from Islamic Relief USA, CMBM’s Gaza team has provided mind-body services and psychosocial relief services to more than 16,000 children and adults throughout Gaza. Our faculty have been running Mind-Body Skills Workshops and Groups at 15 UNRWA shelters in Khan Younis, Bureij, and Rafah, among other areas. They have also offered psychological support to individuals and families through phone and other remote sessions. Please see the additional supporting document for photos of the team’s work, along with select stories shared by those whom they have served.  Over two months, CMBM’s Gaza Faculty has served 7,525 children and 8,888 adults, including 351 first responders. CMBM provided intensive Mind-Body Skills Groups for 512 of the most traumatized children and adults, and Mind-Body Medicine Workshops for 11,634. We served an additional 4,267 through other, individualized psychosocial support activities, via phone, text, and in-person counseling sessions. |
| **Date Submitted** | December 28, 2023 |
| **Duration of Project** | 8 months |
| **Beneficiaries** | Total Proposed Direct Beneficiaries: 66,180  Total Proposed Indirect Beneficiaries: 264,720 |
| **Budget** | $599,756.00  P1: $440,000 – Jan 2024  P2: $59,756 – Sept/Oct 2024 |
| **Zakat Eligible?** | Yes |
| **Zakat Category** | Categories 1 & 2: Fuqara & Masakin (Poor & Needy) |
| **Zakat Category Justification** | CMBM is serving traumatized children and adults, including many orphans, in Gaza, most of whom are displaced from their homes. Beneficiaries of the project have, in most cases, lost family members, their homes, and their belongings, and lack access to basic resources including food, water, and fuel. |
| **% of Zakat Funds Used** | 100.00 % |
| **Funding Source for this Project** | Palestine Zakat |
| **Funds Currently Available?** | Yes |
| **Programs Recommendation** | Yes |
| **PAC Recommendation** | Yes |
| **CEO Recommendation** | Yes |