

Philippines: One year after Haiyan, the rebuilding continues

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Emergency response launched in Iraqi Kurdistan

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One donor's mission to save lives through mine clearance

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U.S. prohibits landmines—with one exception

NEWS

On September 23, the Obama Administration made a solemn promise to the world—the U.S. “will not use [antipersonnel landmines] outside of the Korean Peninsula.” What’s more, the U.S. will begin to destroy its stockpiles of landmines—estimated to be in the millions—so long as they “are not required for the defense of the Republic of Korea.”

Handicap International welcomes these vital steps toward compliance with the Ottawa Treaty, which bans the production, transfer, and use of antipersonnel landmines. However, Elizabeth MacNairn, executive director of Handicap International U.S., stresses that the U.S. government must find alternatives to landmines on the Korean Peninsula.

“Given that the U.S. has repeatedly acknowledged the serious humanitarian consequences of using antipersonnel landmines, it is illogical and immoral for the U.S. to continue using mines in any country,” MacNairn said. “The inevitable loss of innocent lives is an outrage.”

The U.S. statement failed to provide clear deadlines about when President Obama might submit the treaty to the U.S. Senate for ratification. “The positive announcements must be cemented into our country’s laws through ratification,” said MacNairn. “We hope that this crucial step won’t drift beyond 2016, President Obama’s final year in office.”

For more than 20 years, the U.S. has refrained from using or trading antipersonnel landmines, and landmine production ended in 1997. The U.S. is by far the world’s largest donor to projects that reduce the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war, spending \$2.3 billion on mine action since 1993. Indeed, the U.S. government has generously supported Handicap International mine action projects in countries such as Lebanon, Libya, and Senegal.

Annual global funding for action against mines reached \$681 million in 2012, after a decade that saw clearance or survey work release nearly 772 square miles of land.

By working towards acceding to the Ottawa Treaty, the U.S. confirms that these standards are essential and sets an example to follow. Handicap International will now work to encourage U.S. authorities to fulfill their promises while urging powers like China and Russia, which along with 33 other countries, have not joined the treaty, to follow the American example.

Handicap International has mine action projects, including mine clearance, victim assistance, and risk education programs in more than 40 countries.



Handicap International's biggest annual landmine awareness event is the Pyramid of Shoes in Lyon, France. Each shoe represents a life or limb lost to a mine.

Of every **10** mine and ERW victims,
7 are civilians, including **3** children.



Only **3** are soldiers.

Aiding Gaza's injured



The onset of conflict in July forced Handicap International to temporarily suspend its normal rehabilitation projects inside the Gaza Strip. However, some staff members remained during the fighting and were able to source mobility devices such as wheelchairs and crutches for hospitals treating the injured.

With the first ceasefire in early August, our staff and local partners deployed

nine mobile rehabilitation teams comprised of physical therapists, social workers, and mental health specialists.

Today, Handicap International has expanded to 15 mobile teams which have helped more than 4,000 people with injuries and disabilities and distributed more than 600 wheelchairs, crutches, and other mobility devices.

Stemming the tide of Ebola



Handicap International has launched Ebola prevention campaigns targeting people with disabilities in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

People with disabilities, especially those who are blind or deaf, are often not educated about health and disease prevention because the information is not shared in a format they can understand. This lack of awareness makes them more

vulnerable to contracting disease and less likely to seek appropriate care.

Together with 10 local partners, staff organize information sessions to educate people with disabilities about how Ebola is transmitted, how to reduce the risk of transmission, how to spot the symptoms of the virus, and what to do if they suspect someone has been infected.



Handicap International staff have delivered 150 pigs to vulnerable families.

Philippines: One year later

Handicap International continues to help people to rebuild their lives after Typhoon Haiyan

PROJECT UPDATE

It's 5 a.m. in Barangay San Diego, Tacloban, and a small Handicap International team arrives with a gift for Oscar Balang: a pregnant pig to help him earn money.

Last year, Oscar Balang, who had a leg amputated, lost his ability to earn a living

when the world's strongest typhoon on record, Typhoon Haiyan, roared through the Philippines, destroying his property.

Handicap International, which has been present in the Philippines since 1985, has been hard at work helping people with disabilities and their families since the storm

struck. Generous donors have funded fleets of trucks to distribute 1,800 tons of food, 1,390 tents, and other aid. Donors like you enabled our rehabilitation experts to provide care, as well as orthopedic materials to local medical centers, and to seek out the community's most vulnerable individuals, who

would otherwise struggle to access basic aid, medical care, and mobility devices.

Today, we are closely involved in reconstruction efforts. We're repairing or building new homes for more than 1,000 families and helping members of 800 households to regain their financial independence.

Note from the Executive Director



As a loyal friend of Handicap International, I hope you'll enjoy our fourth issue of The Next Step.

Your generosity is incredible. This summer, your compassion ensured that thousands of Iraqis with disabilities and injuries fleeing to Iraqi Kurdistan were met by Handicap International staff. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, you enabled our staff to make life-saving Ebola prevention messages accessible to people with disabilities.

And, your foresight means that five years after the devastating Haiti earthquake, a beautiful girl called Christella is standing tall on her new prosthetic leg, custom-fit and built by Handicap International-trained Haitian technicians.

To celebrate donors like you, we're introducing a new donor spotlight feature to The Next Step. This issue, we highlight the incredible dedication of Rev. Joyce Myers-Brown, who has made fundraising for landmine clearance one of her chief missions in life.

Thank you for being part of this vital work.

Beth MacNairn
Executive Director



A young girl sleeps inside a construction site in Dohuk after fleeing with her family from her home.

Emergency response launched in Iraq



Handicap International is helping thousands of displaced people in Iraqi Kurdistan

NEWS

Since the beginning of the year, more than 500,000 Iraqis have fled to the Erbil and Dohuk governorates in Iraqi Kurdistan where Handicap International has operational bases. The UNHCR estimates that 40% of the displaced people are "vulnerable"—people with disabilities, injuries, and chronic diseases, as well as older people.

Thanks to our more than 23 years of experience in the region and an extensive network of connections, we were able to launch an emergency response in support of vulnerable Iraqis immediately following the fall of Mosul in June.

"When hundreds of thousands of people need food, shelter, and care, people with disabilities and older people need even more support because they can't move around very easily and go out in search of assistance," said Benedetta Di Cintio, Handicap International's head of mission in Iraq.

People have been cut off from the care they need to stay alive.

"For example, I met people taking refuge in a school, who just a few days before, had still been living normal lives. Among them was a little girl with epilepsy. Her mother told me that she had run out of epilepsy medication and couldn't buy any more where they were."

With displaced people sheltering in schools, mosques, and even construction sites, Handicap International mobile rehabilitation teams are traveling door to door to find the most critical cases.

"We're trying to build a bridge between the most vulnerable people and the available health services," said Di Cintio. "All displaced people find themselves in a very difficult situation. However, we target people who have to cope with additional problems, frequently because they

have a disability, injury, or a chronic disease.

"We're working to ensure that their situation doesn't get any worse than it is. Some of the people we are assisting need physical therapy sessions, mobility devices like wheelchairs, prostheses, blood transfusions, chemotherapy, and insulin. In many cases, care was available where they lived before but now they've been completely cut off. It's essential to help them access the health and rehabilitation services they need to stay alive and healthy as quickly as possible."

Handicap International aims to help 13,000 displaced Iraqis by March 2015. In addition, our staff are supporting 2,500 Syrian refugees in four camps in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Haven gets a new set of wheels

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

Every day in Iraq, our mobile rehabilitation teams make a difference in the lives of displaced Iraqis. We make a special effort to help children with disabilities.

Without properly fitted equipment that is adjusted as a child grows, the child is at risk of developing more serious, permanent conditions.

Our staff found Haven, who has juvenile osteoporosis, in a displaced

persons' camp with her family. They realized that the wheelchair she was using was much too big (photo on the right). Without a fitted chair, Haven sat slumped back in her seat, which would ultimately lead to further serious bone malformations.

Thanks to generous donors, a supply of rugged wheelchairs designed for children arrived at our base. Haven now has a new, customized wheelchair that provides her body the support she needs.



"People were arriving on our doorstep"



Camille Borie is the Emergency Program Manager in Iraqi Kurdistan

In an emergency situation, no one stops to rest. The working conditions are difficult and the nights short. This summer, our teams had to start very early in part to avoid the stifling, 100-plus degree heat.

Handicap International's role in Iraqi Kurdistan is extremely important. Our mobile teams go from tent to tent and house to house to find people with disabilities, the injured, and those suffering from diseases like diabetes and cancer. We distribute made-to-fit wheelchairs, crutches, and other items that were left behind during rushed escapes, and we ensure they receive the specific care and services they need.

The situation deteriorated over the summer, but when armed groups began advancing across Iraq in August, the Iraqi population was overcome with panic and fled. These are people who had led a normal life, with a job and a house, but lost everything in just a few hours.

Displaced people were arriving on our doorstep. We found families everywhere—packed into more than 600 schools, sleeping in mosques, churches, and, of course, on the streets. Camps are still being built to rehouse displaced Iraqis, and to allow the schools to re-open.

I will never forget one meeting with a man who had a leg amputated. He was distraught. We were able to provide him with a prosthetic leg, and I was there when he tried it for the first time. Being able to stand again filled him with emotion. Witnessing moments like this give our staff the resolve to continue working hard.

Background

Geography

Iraqi Kurdistan is a semi-autonomous region in northern Iraq. It is bordered by Turkey to the north, Iran to the east, and Syria to the west. Its capital is Erbil.

History

Iraqi Kurdistan is largely populated by ethnic Kurds who have sought independence from Iraq for decades. Kurdish rebellions in 1988 and 1991 were brutally suppressed by Saddam Hussein. Following the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, a Kurdish semi-autonomous government was formalized. Due to the Syria conflict and extremist movements in Iraq, Iraqi Kurdistan currently hosts hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees and displaced Iraqis.

Mandate

Handicap International launched an emergency project in May 2014 in four Syrian refugee camps to ensure that people with disabilities are able to access aid and services. Immediately following the fall of Mosul in June 2014, Handicap International deployed mobile rehabilitation teams to meet the needs of displaced Iraqis.

Renewed support for Christella, 15, Haiti earthquake survivor



THE BIG PICTURE

November 30, 2012 ↑

Christella was first fitted with a prosthesis in 2010 after her left leg was crushed in the Haiti earthquake. Two years later, her prosthesis is still holding up to the rigors of childhood play.

July 1, 2014 →

Handicap International helped Christella's mother, Cadet Marie, to open a small shop so that she could better support Christella and her six other children.

Thanks to the business and investment skills she learned through Handicap International's vocational training program, Cadet Marie makes enough profit to pay for her children's school fees and health care expenses. "I am happy—my business is doing better and better," said Cadet Marie.



June 27, 2014 ↑

Now a young woman, Christella outgrew her original prosthesis and was having trouble walking. Handicap International brought her to an orthopedic center where she was fitted for a new prosthesis. "Now I can play soccer again with my friends and walk to school without a problem," said Christella.

“This gift has the power to save lives”

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

“I remember driving with companions down a road in rural Angola filled with fear—the ground was full of landmines,” said Rev. Joyce Myers-Brown, who served as a missionary in Angola before and during the country’s bloody civil war. “We thanked God when we arrived safely.”

Rev. Myers-Brown is all too familiar with the devastating impact landmines have on their victims—and on the psyche of those forced to live among hidden killers. Rev. Myers-Brown had been a missionary in Angola before the war, which began in 1975, and she saw on subsequent mission visits how landmines transformed the country. Friends had been injured or killed by landmines, sites she hoped to visit were off-limits due to contamination, and posters hung everywhere warning people—especially children—of the dangers of landmines.

The landmine pollution in Angola was so significant, that even after surviving an accident, there was fear one might be struck again. “One young seminarian I met was missing a leg from a landmine and planned to



A sign warns of hidden landmines in Huambo, Angola, where Rev. Myers-Brown worked.



Rev. Joyce Myers-Brown educates people who attend her church’s alternative gift fair about landmines and mine clearance.

work in rural areas once he finished his studies,” said Rev. Myers-Brown. “It was a courageous decision because he knew much of the rural areas had not been cleared of mines.”

Putting her passion into action, Rev. Myers-Brown has spent almost 20 years as a tireless anti-landmine advocate and mine-clearance fundraiser. For ten years, she chaired the Adopt-A-Minefield effort of the United Nations Association Atlanta Chapter, raising nearly \$250,000 for this former mine clearance program.

When the program ended, Rev. Myers-Brown looked for a new landmine clearance organization to support. “I did some research and found Handicap International,” said Rev. Myers-Brown. “I respected how the organization works, its low administrative costs, and the number of countries where it works to clear landmines and explosive remnants of war.”

Since 2009, she has raised funds for Handicap International’s mine action program through her church’s alternative gift fair. After years of giving donations to other charities in lieu of holiday gifts for her grandchildren, Rev. Myers-Brown worked with Handicap International staff to create holiday tribute cards to encourage attendees at the gift fair to support Handicap International.

She tells people: “If you want to really make a difference in the world, buy a tribute card.” And to date, her efforts have brought in almost \$7,000, an amount that equates to roughly 14,000 square yards of mine-free land.

But it isn’t just about the money. Rev. Myers-Brown sees education and advocacy as an essential part of her efforts. She teaches children in her church’s Sunday School about landmines and recruits their help in educating others. “Roughly every two hours, someone somewhere on the face of the earth steps on a landmine, and if it is a child there is a good chance they will die,” said Rev. Myers-Brown. “However, we can do something to stop this. This is the message we try to share with as many people as possible.”

On November 16, Rev. Myers-Brown will once again set up her table in Atlanta at the Central Congregational United Church of Christ’s alternative gift fair. And once again she will tell people about the need for a mine-free world and Handicap International’s work to reach that goal. “It makes me feel that I’m making some kind of difference in a world full of war. This is one unseen terrorist that we can combat without arms, without violence. Few people need another necktie or scarf, and this gift has the power to save lives.”

Join Us.

Handicap International’s website has the most up-to-date news, plus photos and videos of the people your donations help. www.handicap-international.us

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We’d love to hear from you.

reachout@handicap-international.us

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