

IMPACT REPORT 2025



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OPERATION  MERCY

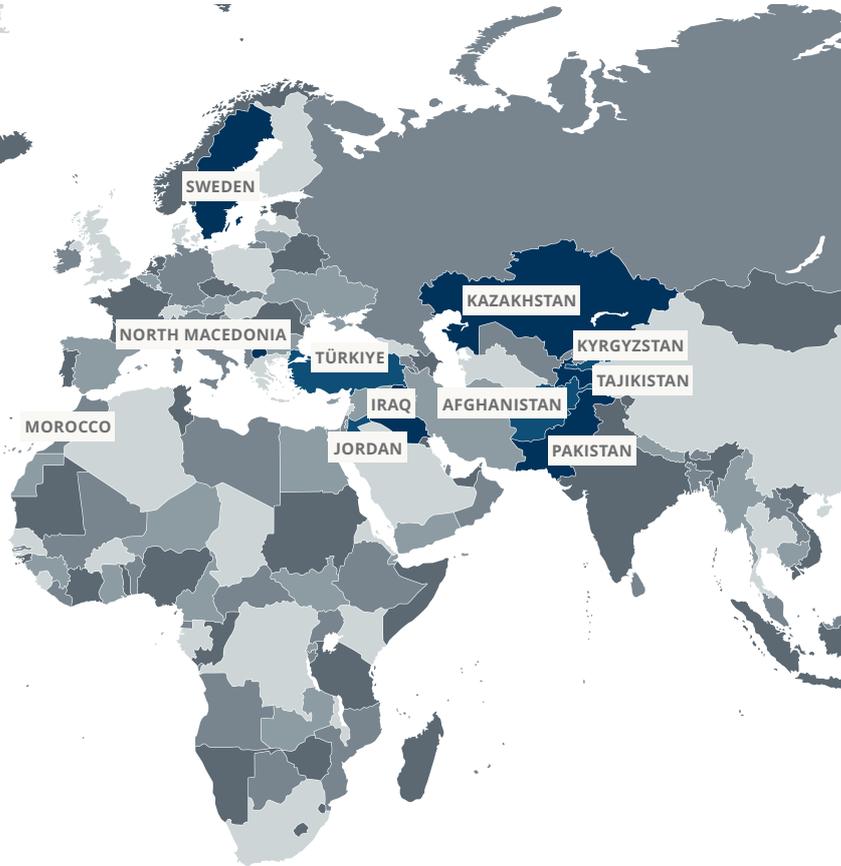




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Names have been changed in this report

**PART ONE:**

ABOUT US

WHERE WE WORK

GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS:

We work primarily in Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. We aim to be bridgebuilders and peacemakers, approaching individuals with hearts of faith and trust, along with an attitude of learning. This mindset, together with our long-term strategies and focus on cultural and language acquisition, has made us an organisation that is respected and successful in community development, even in these often-neglected regions and their complex settings.

OFFICES:

Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, North Macedonia, Sweden (International Headquarters)

PARTNERS:

Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, North Africa, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Türkiye

From the Director

Looking back at 2025, many in the development and humanitarian sector describe the year with very strong language. “Seismic” or “forced reset of the global aid architecture” are only some examples used.

Yes, it is right- while we have been talking about uncertain times, complexities and disruptions for several years now – 2025 was a further shock to many in the sector.

So how about us? What do things like the closure of USAID, major cuts of other institutional donors including SIDA in Sweden, the politicisation and militarisation of aid, including the effects on the United Nations, mean for us – and our purpose of restoring hope, building capacity and promoting community.

I think the answer is right there – our purpose, what we want to see in the communities and people we work and partner with, is also what keeps us alive and even flourishing in such times.



Reading other people’s reviews makes me extremely thankful to our **COMMUNITY**, that stands with us in times of trouble. It reminds me of the **HOPE** we have that is beyond ourselves, governments or funding agreements. We have a hope in the goodness and righteousness of God, and it helps me to know that our strength and **CAPACITY** is most of all in people and in the talents and dreams they have.

Yes, it has been a hard year, but not as bad as for many others in the sector. We have lost funding and have struggled, especially in North Macedonia and with our core funding for very important functions like finance, monitoring, learning and evaluation, yes we have lost support by the World Food Programme for one of our Projects in Afghanistan – but I don’t think my first words to describe 2025 for Operation Mercy would have been seismic, catastrophic or similar.

Much more the first things that come to mind are that we had the resources and opportunity to train 26 people from 13 countries in our Project Cycle Management course, including preparing

We are more aware than ever that we can only restore hope if we continue to carry hope within us

new trainers during two weeks in Jordan. I was also able to visit and invest in leadership capacity and our staff and volunteer community and local partner organisations in Jordan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and a very brief visit to Kyrgyzstan in 2025.

While 2025 exposed risks in the sector, we remained proactive and true to our organisational culture and values by once more adapting to these challenges. With disciplined structural and financial decisions, we kept leadership development and partner engagement a priority in 2025.

We are more aware than ever that we can only restore hope if we continue to carry hope within us – and that we do not want to be overcome by the hopelessness the world around us portrays. Aware that we can only build capacity, in systems and organisations where people's capacity has been affirmed and they are empowered, to look beyond the here and now, to dream dreams. And aware that we can only promote community, because we are community with all of YOU – our supporters, our friends, co-workers, in our teams and as

Operation Mercy International. Our organisational culture of community and hope continues to be our greatest asset and what we want to share with all of you, whether you are a CEO of a foundation supporting us financially, a faithful follower on social media, a long term member in Sweden, a mayor of a village in Afghanistan, a government official in Jordan, or woman in Skopje, North Macedonia.

Thanks for being **COMMUNITY** for and with us, for contributing to our **CAPACITY** and sharing **HOPE** for people without hope in Central Asia, the Middle East and many other communities out there.

Yours,



Andrea Vogt,

International Director, February 2026

WHO WE ARE

Operation Mercy is an international relief and development organisation headquartered in Sweden. With over 30 years of experience, we are a community of professionals from many different nations who serve the poor and marginalised in 12 countries throughout Central Asia, North Africa and the Middle East through an array of community development and humanitarian aid projects.

Our community represents men and women, young and old, diverse languages, ethnicities, and faith backgrounds. Even though we are different, we are united in wanting to see people raised up, in and through community, because we share a hope that enables us to look beyond the pain and suffering, we encounter every day.



»Operation Mercy partners
with others to **restore hope,**
build capacity, and **promote**
community«



OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Our vision is to work in partnership with others to restore hope, grow capacity, and promote community through relief and development initiatives that help transform lives, including our own.

Mission and Purpose of the organisation and our change process

Operation Mercy is an international relief and development organisation with over 30 years of experience. The purpose of the organisation, as stated in the Charter, is to carry out relief and development work, primarily in North Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia. We are a community of professionals who serve the poor and marginalised through an array of community development and humanitarian aid projects.

We do this by working in partnership with others to restore hope, grow capacity, and promote community through relief and development initiatives that help transform lives, including our own.

In order to build a change process that we believe will bring lasting hope and strong flourishing communities, understanding their own capacity and how to grow it we keep the following three areas in mind:

TOUCHPOINTS

Through the years, Operation Mercy has gained special expertise in six areas of development, which we call our *'Touchpoints'*:

- Community health
- Community based rehabilitation
- Women's empowerment
- Vocational training and character formation
- Sport and development
- Sustainable agriculture

These are the areas where we have an opportunity to touch a community.

CORE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

We engage the community through:

- mutual strength and assets-based approach
- contribution and transformation
- inside-out and bottom-up approach

- people empowerment
- sustainability and reproducibility
- multiplication
- accountability
- values-based and rights-based approaches
- realistic optimism

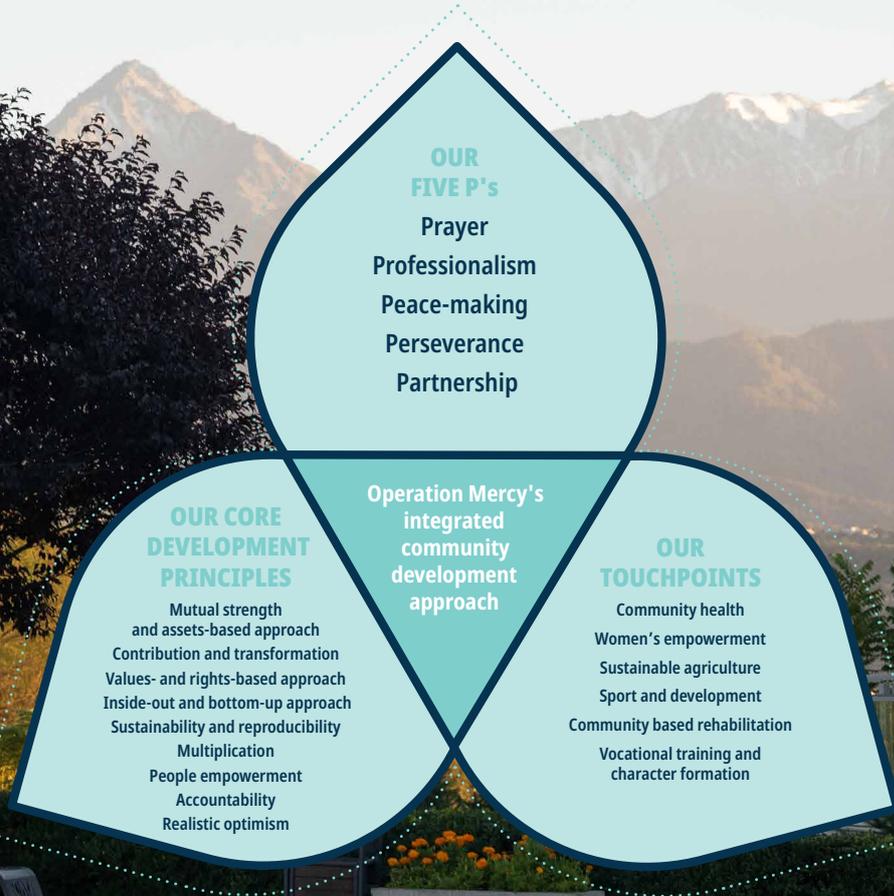
FIVE KEY PRIORITIES

The final side of our change processes are our key priorities — the five P's of Prayer, Professionalism, Peace-making, Perseverance, and Partnership.

Together these three areas form the basis of Operation Mercy's integrated community development approach, through which we aim to bring lasting and sustainable transformational development.

RELIEF INTERVENTIONS

Relief interventions need a swift response. Even here we engage the community in a rapid form of our core development principles and keep our touchpoints and key priorities in mind for potential longer term development in an area affected by disaster.



OPERATION MERCY IN NUMBERS

Total expenditure
in 2025

€ **1,988,157** *

International office costs vs
project costs:

10% vs 90%

Total direct project
beneficiaries/participants

53,872

Estimated indirect
project beneficiaries

215,000

Ratio direct
project participants

women & children **93%**

men **7%**





Total Volunteer
Hours in 2025

77,802 hours

Valued at

SEK 16,159,475 ***
€ 1,495,486 **

Our motivated, long term, professional, and self-funded staff are among our greatest assets. They contribute more than 2/5 to the cost of each action completed!

THE CHALLENGE:

When **you give 100 €**, we add **85 €**-worth of volunteer hours. Together we impact 25 lives through restoring hope, building capacity and growing community.



90 SVENSK
KONTO INSAMLINGS
KONTROLL

Swish: 123 90 20 207
or operationmercy.org/give

- * Figures not final. Updated report with audited financial will be available June 2026.
- ** Exchange rates 10.8055 from <https://www.xe.com/currencycharts/?from=EUR&to=SEK>
- *** Based on the Swedish average wage in November 2025: 207.7 SEK/hour (<https://tradingeconomics.com/sweden/wages>)

DEPTH OF ENGAGEMENT

Operation Mercy's approach to community development prioritises meaningful contact with participants while stewarding resources responsibly. We often describe this as a high-touch, low-cost model that pursues relational proximity and sustained engagement without relying on high-expense interventions.

With our projects engaged across varied contexts and activity types, it became increasingly important to distinguish not only how many people were reached, but how they were engaged. Participant totals alone cannot adequately reflect differences between public awareness events, structured training environments, mentoring relationships, or long-term relational investment.

To bring clarity and consistency in quantifying engagement across programmes, we developed the following "Depth of Engagement" rubric. This framework allows us to communicate interactions according to observable characteristics such as continuity, relational intensity, skill transfer, and duration.

The interaction builds awareness by allowing people to observe, listen, or receive information without requiring a response or follow up.

These interactions often serve as early access points or exploratory engagements.

LEVEL 1: PASSIVE

Single exposure with no meaningful two-way engagement or follow-up mechanism.

Attending a public event, receiving a leaflet, listening to a broadcast message

LEVEL 2: OCCASIONAL

Infrequent or irregular contact with minimal continuity or relational development.

Occasional drop-in attendance, one-off consultation, lecture, sporadic visit

Engagement is consistent, with an emphasis on instruction, information, or event based content rather than individualized relationships.

This level supports steady learning, routine participation, and ongoing exposure to program themes.

A program participant takes part in recurring activities focused on applied learning and skill development.

LEVEL 3: REGULAR

Repeated contact primarily characterized by structured delivery rather than personal interaction.

Lecture-style sessions, classroom teaching, seminar attendance

LEVEL 4: PRACTICAL

Recurring engagement involving active skill transfer or applied learning.

Vocational training, workshops, technical instruction, coaching sessions.

LEVEL 5: DEEP

Sustained relational or mentoring-oriented engagement involving identifiable participants and follow-up.

Case management, small groups, ongoing personal mentoring.

Interactions include dialogue, mentoring, or personalised support, creating familiarity and developmental progression.

This level represents meaningful, sustained engagement that strengthens learning and behavioural follow through.

LEVEL 6: INTENSIVE

High-commitment, high-continuity engagement involving life integration, long-term mentorship, or household-level accompaniment.

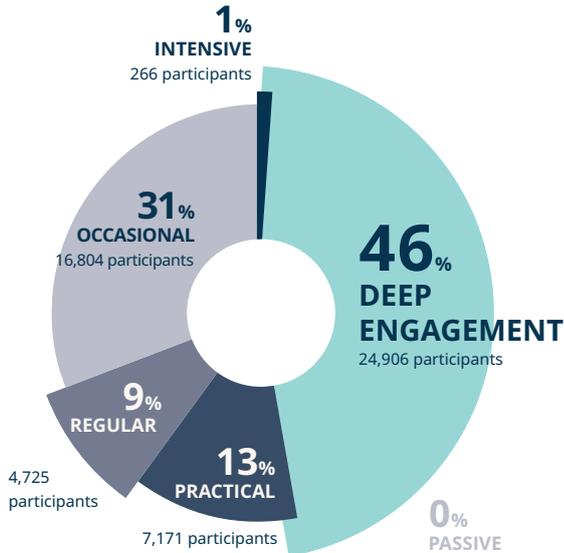
Household accompaniment, long-term mentorship, embedded community presence.

Interaction extends beyond program sessions into broader life contexts through long-term accompaniment or mentorship.

This level represents the most sustained and integrated form of engagement, typical of complex or long term development pathways.

53,872
participants and
605,900
interactions in 2025

Depth of engagement with participants across all our projects



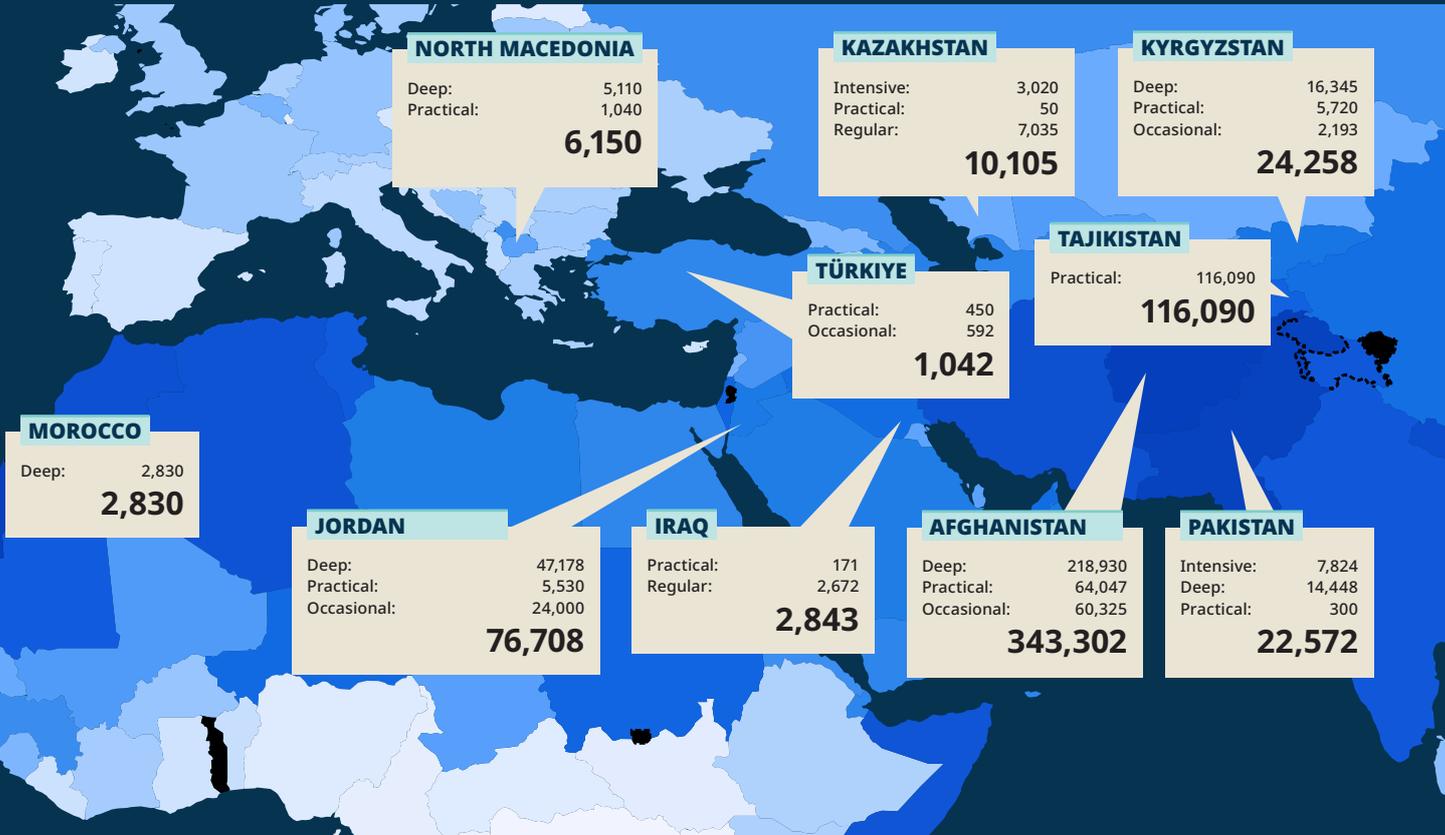
» We interact

15 times

or more with the majority of participants through repeated, relationship-centered engagement «



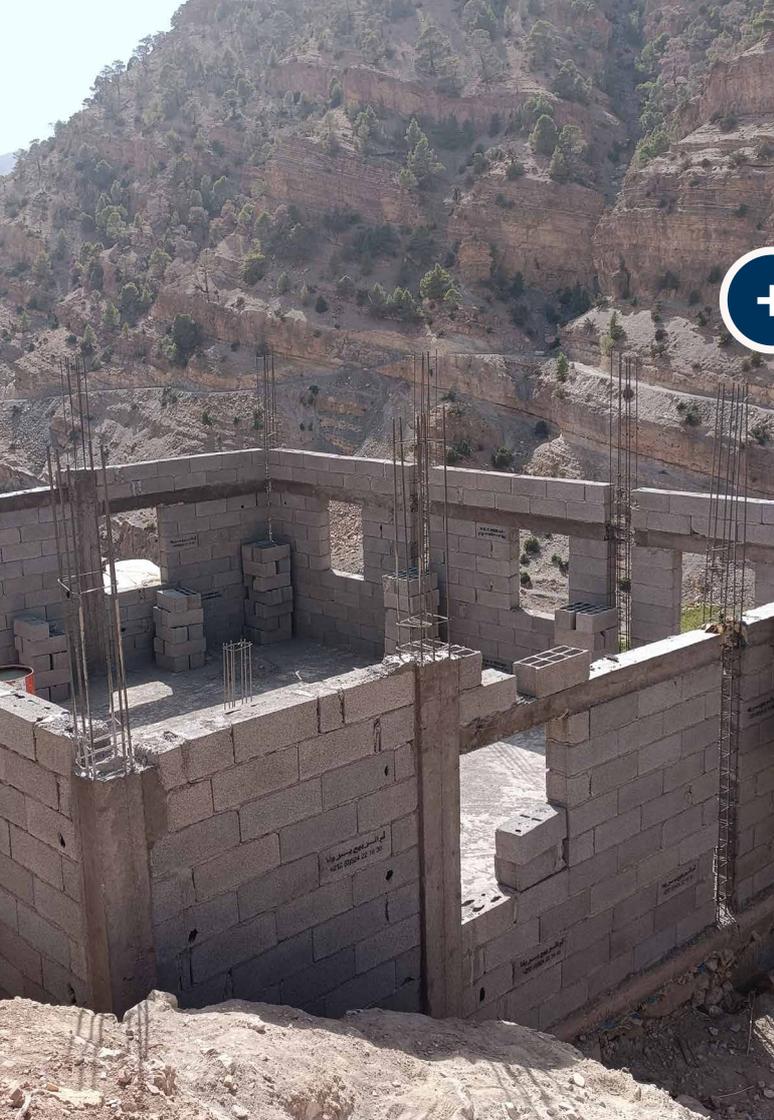
605,900 INTERACTIONS across 10 countries in 2025



PART TWO:

STORIES OF CHANGE





2025 INTERVENTIONS

RELIEF INTERVENTIONS

Operation Mercy has continued to be involved in the relief response after the Morocco earthquake of 2023 and the Kazakhstan flood in the north-west of the country in 2024. Both responses lead to further development work in the countries.

FLOOD RELIEF PROJECT, KAZAKHSTAN

Local Partnerships to Maximise Capacity

When a massive flood hit the north-west of the country, our team was able to visit and make connections with families and centres with children with disabilities. The team has had opportunities to make short visits a few times for follow up and further training.

Entering into an established community is a delicate task. As our team visited a centre where the staff work with children with special needs, our goal was to support and not to dominate. We desired to partner and not to shame. Yes, we have knowledge and skills, but so do the staff, who have decades of experience. They also stay when we have to leave after our brief trip.

We spent a few days interacting with the staff, listening to a lesson about oral hygiene, and spending time with the kids. This gave us small opportunities to understand the culture of the centre, the experience of the staff, and the needs of continuing education.



As I began my training for the staff on how to use visual materials to support speech and language development, I started by affirming the care and the good work that I saw in the staff. I shared with them how I see them bringing dignity to children who are often disregarded in society. I could see the faces soften as I shared with them how I see their heart and love for these children. I reiterated our goal of partnering together to support these children.

With this foundation in place, I shared practical ways to use visual supports to aid communication development. Within this context of partnership and walking alongside the staff, I was able to demonstrate how the use of pictures can support children with communication difficulties. We are hopeful that by establishing this foundation of partnership, we have provided a small but meaningful tool to this community; one that can increase their capacity and strengthen relationships. •

EARTHQUAKE RELIEF - MOROCCO

Joy Through Play

After the 2023 earthquake in Morocco destroyed homes and buildings throughout the High Atlas Mountains and other regions, our partners assisted with relief efforts and then with rebuilding – including a playground for the school!

It was hard to believe, but this was the first time the young girl had ever seen a playground, let alone actually played on one. Initially she looked around shyly, almost as though not sure she was allowed to be there. Then, tentatively, she climbed onto the spring swing which had the motif of a sheep on the sides. As she began to rock back and forth, she could not hide her joy, as evidenced by the growing smile on her face. While the tower and slide nearby were dominated by the larger and more boisterous group of boys, this girl had found a place where she could be in her own little world and experience the simple, yet profound joy found in a small piece of playground equipment. Excitedly she announced, “I’m going to stay here all day until sunset!” Whether she was still there at sunset or not I cannot say, but a long time



later when I looked across the playground she was indeed still there, rocking back and forth, her smile just as wide.

As we carried yet another load of tools and materials up the steep and rocky track to the flat area of ground in front of the school building, one boy came over to ask a question. While he had never played on one before, he had somehow heard of a seesaw, and using a stick and his fingers to describe it he asked whether we might possibly be building one of those. The excitement he had when I told him that indeed we were going to build a seesaw was so special, and indeed contagious! That afternoon the seesaw was installed, and from then until close to sunset when we drove away there wasn't a moment the seesaw wasn't in action, bouncing up and down with at least three or four children on each side! •

1

TOUCH POINT

COMMUNITY BASED REHABILITATION

In some societies, children with disabilities (CWD) and people with disabilities (PWD) are some of the most marginalised people and are often hidden from view due to stigma or lack of knowledge.

Operation Mercy works professionally with the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s Community Based Rehabilitation strategies and in line with the Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in **Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Jordan and Northern Iraq**. Some of our aims are to seek to support and empower CWD and PWD and their caregivers, provide them with opportunities and to work with communities towards inclusivity.

TAJIKISTAN

Standing Strong

Farhad is a bright seven-year-old and the third child in his family. However, unlike his siblings, he has faced significant challenges since birth due to Cerebral Palsy, which limited his ability to walk, speak, and control his movements. Although he could sit independently, he struggled to express himself, causing emotional distress and social isolation.

His mother recalls being terrified upon hearing his diagnosis and, for years, relying only on medication and neurological care while watching him gesture that he wanted to play with other children and go to school like his brother and sister.

Hope arrived when a neurologist referred them to our partner organization, where

Farhad was welcomed with warmth and compassion. Despite crying on his first day, he quickly began to trust the staff. Through consistent rehabilitation, Farhad achieved remarkable progress: he learned to stand up from a chair independently, gained better control over his arm movements, now stands without a brace or corset, communicates his needs through gestures and sounds, and actively plays and participates with peers. These milestones have transformed his daily life and brought his family immense joy and renewed hope. Today, his mother speaks about his future with confidence, saying she is inspired by his progress and believes he will one day attend school and achieve great things. •



Through consistent rehabilitation, Farhad achieved remarkable progress



...she maintained a special hope for Haneen, that one day she would have the opportunity to get better and be more mobile than her older three siblings.

IRAQ

A Family Effort

Through war and conflict in Iraq, some families have endured incredible difficulties including the loss of family members, disabilities, and lack of resources. Different from the usual news headlines, we have met resilient families who have persevered through the hardship.

Haneen is one of five children. Four of the children have quadriplegic cerebral palsy and are completely dependent on their caretakers. Their mother is a widow of five years, losing her husband shortly after they survived the occupation and war that terrorised their city from 2014 to 2017.

Haneen was the youngest of the four disabled children. Her three older siblings

already had so many contractures in their bodies that made it nearly impossible for them to maintain a good sitting position. Their mother worked tirelessly to clean, feed, change, and provide for them. She was determined to do her best for her children, regardless of their circumstances. However, she maintained a special hope for Haneen, that one day she would have the opportunity to get better and be more mobile than her older three siblings.

Feeling almost overwhelmed by the desperation of this situation, one of our physiotherapists began treatment with Haneen, working towards any functional movement that could potentially help ease the workload on the mother. The

mother and the youngest sister caught wind of the hope that was rising for Haneen to do things the rest of her siblings have never been able to do. She now maintains a good sitting position on the floor, she is rolling and crawling, she can stand in a gait trainer and is working towards the ability to take steps by herself in the gait trainer.

It has been our joy at Operation Mercy Iraq to serve alongside Haneen and her family to see the incredible progress she has been making. For Haneen, persevering through challenges brings her family hope for the future. •

**For Haneen,
persevering
through
challenges
brings her
family hope for
the future.**





Their thoughts and actions revolve entirely around their child

KYRGYZSTAN

Our Life is not Our Own

Many mothers of children with disabilities experience significant isolation, as caregiving responsibilities often keep them at home for extended periods. These mothers report feelings of suspicion, shame, guilt, and a sense of punishment related to having a child with special needs.

To address this, a social worker organised a meeting titled “Mothers Together,” inviting six mothers and their children. Two young women assisted by caring for the children while the mothers participated in a session led by the women’s health project.

During an icebreaker activity, many mothers spoke primarily about their children rather than themselves,

indicating that they are unaccustomed to others showing personal interest in them.

One trainer observed, “They have no life of their own anymore. Their thoughts and actions revolve entirely around their child, resulting in ongoing worry and feelings of being overwhelmed.”

When participants were later invited to share their experiences, initial hesitation gave way to open communication, with each mother expressing empathy and support for one another. The emotional impact was notable for both mothers and volunteers. As a result, the mothers expressed a desire to continue meeting regularly, recognising the value of mutual support and acceptance within the group. •



2

TOUCH POINT

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

The biggest challenges facing agriculture today are climate change, soil degradation or excessive salinity in the soil, water scarcity, pests and diseases, and the need to ensure food security for a growing population.

Since 2014 the Agricultural Cooperation for Development (AC4D) programme in the **Jordan Valley** has been supporting farmers with techniques and readily accessible technologies to overcome these challenges. In the expanse of the Jordan Valley, Operation Mercy is helping farmers to establish productive and sustainable agriculture to provide fresh and nutritious fruit and vegetables to their communities and to support their livelihoods



...the farmer realised that his large, highly visible plot of land could be rehabilitated.

JORDAN

Farming in the Jordan Valley

In a region where young farmers are increasingly rare, one such farmer took a transformative decision — guided directly by the soil testing service provided through our Agricultural Cooperation 4 Development (AC4D) project.

After receiving his soil and water analysis results, the farmer realised that his large, highly visible plot of land along the main road — considered completely unusable — could be rehabilitated. Acting on the

recommendations given by our team, he chose to implement active deferment with cover cropping, a technique that uses minimal irrigation water to rebuild soil structure, improve fertility, and reduce salinity stress.

Being on the main road, his plot is visible to people passing through the area. His choice to adopt our technique in such a public space served as a major affirmation of AC4D's credibility and impact within the farming community. •



3

TOUCH POINT

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

In many of the communities in which we work, women are seen as unimportant, with no chance to make their voices heard or have their needs and wants addressed.

Through the projects, we are empowering vulnerable women to release their potential in **Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Türkiye**. We believe that community members have the greatest potential to transform their own lives, their families, and their communities.



TAJKISTAN

A Celebration of Dignity

This year's International Women's Day celebration under the Women's Empowerment Project (WEP) was unlike any before. For the first time, nearly 80 per cent of all participants were women from the deaf community. These women, often pushed to the margins because they cannot hear or speak, found themselves at the very centre of the celebration.

The theme spoke powerfully to their hearts:
*"I am a princess of my father.
 I am gold for my brother.
 I am a friend to my sister.
 I am the coolness of my mother's eyes.
 I am the queen of my husband's heart.
 I am a woman."*

For many of these women, this was not just poetry, it was an awakening. Their faces lit up as they repeated the words, some signing them with joy. It was as though, for the first time, they were hearing what the world often denies them: that they are precious, valued,

and worthy of honour. In a society where their silence can make them feel invisible, this moment broke through the isolation. They were not defined by their disability but by their identity and dignity as women. The celebration gave them a voice without sound, a space without judgment, and a crown of worth that no barrier could take away.

To make the day even more meaningful, gifts were distributed to every woman, a simple but powerful gesture that told them, *"You are seen, you are loved, and you matter."* The smiles, the tears, and the embraces that followed made it clear: this was more than a celebration; it was a moment of restoration. What began as an annual tradition became a testimony: empowerment is not just about programs or activities. It is about recognition, inclusion, and restoring dignity. That day, every woman in the room left not only with a gift in her hands but with joy in her heart. They walked away not as "the deaf community" but as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers – as queens in their own right. •

Trauma and Survival: Sparking Freedom

Aknur* is 37 years old and was born in a small village in the Kyzylorda region of Kazakhstan. Her mother died when she was young, and after her father remarried, Aknur experienced severe abuse from her stepmother. Life at home became unbearable, and she eventually ran away.

When she left her village, a taxi driver brought her not to safety, but to an apartment that became her prison. There, Aknur was chained and held for five years in conditions of extreme exploitation and violence, without freedom or income. One day, risking her life, she escaped by jumping from a third-floor window and fled to Almaty.

We first met Aknur about 10 years ago. She was standing on the street looking for work to survive. At that time, she had no money, her husband had taken their child, and she was completely alone.

Over the years, it became clear that the long-term abuse Aknur endured caused deep psychological trauma.

Influenced by someone she knew, she returned to prostitution.

Over the years, it became clear that the long-term abuse Aknur endured caused deep psychological trauma. About three years ago, she gave birth to a daughter. When authorities attempted to remove the child, Aknur fought to keep her, and we supported her closely during that time. Later, when she became pregnant again, we chose to step back from direct assistance and encouraged her to enter a mother-and-child shelter. She refused and went through the pregnancy alone.

After the birth of her second child, the situation became critical. Fearing for the baby's safety, Aknur placed her older daughter in a private orphanage for a period of time. The child has since returned, and Aknur is again seeking a long-term solution.

Aknur continues to work while raising her children. Recently, we have seen a positive change: she now has nannies caring for them.

This is a painful story of trauma and survival. Despite everything, we continue to walk alongside Aknur — staying in contact, praying with her, and showing God's love through patience and faithfulness. •

**Name changed*

TÜRKIYE

They Carry So Much

The trauma healing workshop took place in Türkiye, in a small living room that witnessed years of displacement, silence, and survival. The women gathered there were Syrian refugees — mothers, widows, sisters — many of whom carried stories never shared in decades, even childhood traumas. Some could not read or write. Some rarely leave their homes. Yet on that day, they came together, led by a woman known in the community not for her title, but for her care.

She had always been the one checking on others — bringing food, listening to complaints, helping neighbors navigate daily struggles. When she heard about the trauma healing workshop, she smiled

with cautious hope. “I would be so happy if we could do the workshop for my friends and family,” she said. “They carry so much, but no one ever asks how they feel.”

At first, the room was quiet. They were used to gathering to share life’s struggles — rent, children, illness, and uncertainty about the future. The complaints were familiar. The emotions were not. The idea of speaking about pain felt unfamiliar, even risky.

Then one woman spoke softly. Another nodded. Slowly, stories emerged—not dramatic, not polished, but real. Loss of home. Fear during the journey. Sleepless nights. Childhood trauma.

The idea of speaking about pain felt unfamiliar, even risky.

One participant said, "It is the first time that we talk about how we feel and someone hears our pain in our stories." Tears fell, but she did not stop. Others followed.

The community leader listened, surprised. "We come together usually to share life struggles and complain," she reflected later, "but I never heard how my community feels about their traumas and experiences." What she discovered was not weakness, but resilience waiting to be acknowledged.

Midway through the workshop, the facilitator gently shifted the focus. She invited the women to think about a "happy place" — a place of safety, rest, or joy — and to draw it. For many, this

felt strange at first. Yet as colors moved across paper, images began to appear.

Many drew homes they no longer had; gardens filled with trees, or the sea — places some had never seen with their own eyes, only in movies or in their imagination. Others drew something simpler: sitting under a tree with friends, sharing tea, feeling at peace. These drawings revealed a deep longing — not just for the past, but for hope.

As the workshop continued, the atmosphere shifted. Tears were met with nods, not judgment. Silence became safe. Laughter even appeared — quiet, hesitant, but real. For women who had



felt invisible for years, being heard was a form of healing.

The workshop did not erase trauma. It did something more honest: it made space. Space to speak. Space to listen. Space to realize they were not alone. And a feeling of being recognised.

When the session ended, the women lingered, holding each other's hands, already asking when they could meet like this again. Healing, they realised, does not begin with answers — but with being seen. •

4

TOUCH POINT

COMMUNITY HEALTH

People who are marginalised and poor are more likely to have ill health, and people with ill health are more likely to be poor. It is a vicious cycle, and the key to breaking it is to help people make good evidence-based health decisions for their own and their families' health.

Operation Mercy works in Community Health among communities in **Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Jordan and North Macedonia**. We work in areas such as maternal and child health and nutrition, health education, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH).

KYRGYZSTAN

A Safe Birth

Through our partner's project pregnant women have access to education and training for successful and respectful labour and birth, and the birth doula profession has been introduced.

When Beka attended our Healthy Pregnancy Seminar, she was eager to learn how to best prepare for childbirth. What she didn't realise at the time was just how much those lessons would help her when the moment arrived.

Beka shared her story with us after safely giving birth to a healthy baby girl weighing 4.5kg (9lb 15oz) and measuring 56cm. Despite the baby's large size, Beka experienced an easy and natural delivery — something she attributes to the knowledge and techniques she learned during the seminar.



"When the contractions started, I walked up the mountain and did exercises at home. I tried to stay active by going up and down the stairs and used deep breathing techniques to manage the pain," Beka explained.

"By the time I arrived at the maternity hospital, my cervix was already 8cm dilated. The midwife praised me and said, 'You came at the right time.' I listened carefully to the doctor's instructions and gave birth naturally and safely."

After the birth, Beka restored her energy with orange juice — a simple but effective tip she also picked up from the seminar.

"The information I received from you was very useful and helped me prepare for childbirth. Even though my baby was large, I didn't need a caesarean section. I breathed properly, followed the guidance, and gave birth successfully. I am deeply grateful to you!"

Beka's story is a powerful reminder of how knowledge, preparation, and confidence can transform the experience of childbirth. Through simple, practical education, women like Beka are empowered to face one of life's greatest moments with strength and peace. •



AFGHANISTAN

Maternal and Child Nutrition and Health

Our Maternal and Child Nutrition and Health Project is improving health practices around birth and childcare amongst the vulnerable population of Afghanistan.

A young mother shares:

"I have been married for three years. For the first year, I was unable to conceive. Then, by the grace of God, I became pregnant. My own family lives in Iran, and my mother-in-law was not supportive. I had no knowledge of how to take care of myself during pregnancy, and eventually, my baby was born, but tragically, my baby passed away.

"Now, I am four months pregnant again. At the beginning of this pregnancy, I constantly

worried about how to properly care for this child. One day, a young woman knocked on our door. I opened it, and she introduced herself as a representative from the Zakireen Township Clinic, offering nutritional counselling.

"Their advice has been incredibly helpful. I've learned how to take better care of myself and my baby. I used to drink almost no water, but now I drink at least eight glasses daily. I also include food from all three food groups in my diet and take better care of my health overall. I have started visiting the clinic regularly, and they have given me folic acid tablets to support my pregnancy." •

"I've learned how to take better care of myself and my baby."

5

TOUCH POINT

VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND CHARACTER FORMATION

Operation Mercy does Vocational Training and Character Formation among people who are experiencing poverty and inactivity in the workforce, giving them the skills and support they need to step into the workforce for financial independence, and improved self-esteem and sense of worth.

We work in **Jordan, Kazakhstan, North Macedonia and Pakistan.** We also work with adults of all ages in places like Mosul, **Iraq** who have experienced indoctrination by ISIS and/or trauma related to war and flight within the past years. They are taught life skills and personal and career development, enabling them to identify practical ways to improve their lives and the circumstances of their families and communities.



NORTH MACEDONIA

Germination for Change

Young mother Amina*, a graduate of the Skills/Startup Training Empowerment and Practice (STEP) vocational training programme, is opening her dress shop today. The 31-year-old completed the course in 2022, but got back into contact with her mentor-trainer for advice in 2025 as she has big ideas for her own life. However, fear paralyses people here, while jealousy and gossip are big obstacles: “You are too old to do this... There is no chance... Why do you work when your husband is working?... What are you doing?” Even Amina’s husband was against her going out to work.

But now, after three years of germinating the idea, Amina was looking for advice

and support. “When you said to me, ‘It is not a problem, we will meet’, I was surprised that you were so available. [But] I’m scared,” she admitted. Our project manager told her not to be scared as she already had the skills needed – she was already making beautiful dresses.

Our project manager suggested that Amina make a dress for a young bride, so that people would see it at the wedding and notice her work. She would be advertising what she could do, potential customers would look around, but they would come back when they saw the quality of her work. “Maybe I will need a logo?” Amina asks. Our project manager agreed to help her.

Our project manager told her not to be scared as she already had the skills needed – she was already making beautiful dresses.

She gave Amina more information about advertising and business, which Amina double checked for herself. When her brother-in-law, who is an accountant, saw what she had learned at the STEP business skills training, he told her, "Oh, you are learning from an economic school!"

Something is happening in the background. STEP students are quiet in the lectures, but something is going in their heads. Ideas have taken root and now, Amina is finally taking the step and opening her own shop. "I do not want to be at home and gossip, I want to do a professional business," she says.

In all of this, STEP is helping participants to help the whole family. Amina has been generating income for the household. Now, her husband listens to her and respects her. Her children are proud.

For many, it takes time for the ideas to get through. Even years. "Now," a joyful project leader exclaims, "we see the fruit!" •

**Name changed*





Sarah noticed the improvement as she started to apply the material: forgiving, apologising, and working towards reconciliation.

IRAQ

Can I Change?

Shy, nervous, tense. Sarah, a 29-year-old mother of two, heard about our character and trauma training from a friend and wanted to see if she could change. Interacting with our staff and training materials, Sarah noticed the improvement as she started to apply the material: forgiving, apologising, and working towards reconciliation.

Growing up, Sarah had a very strong relationship with her cousin, almost like sisters, but unfortunately, she accused Sarah of wrongdoing and slandered her. Sarah cut off her relationship with her and blocked her on all social media platforms. Her cousin got married and had a child, but Sarah never visited or communicated with her. During the training, Sarah started

to work through forgiveness. After the training she went to visit her cousin, taking a wedding gift. The cousin was shocked and happy, and now their relationship has grown even stronger than it was before. Growing in confidence, Sarah has discovered she is resilient, has courage, and learns new things. Her husband noticed this life change. Now apologising, forgiving, and reconciling are normal parts of Sarah's new life. •

PAKISTAN

A Teacher's Heart

The goal of the education project, run by our partner organisation, is to work with remote communities to improve access to education through adult literacy classes and operational support for five remote village schools.

Our partners do this by providing tuition, books, teacher and administration salaries (which include an emphasis on female teachers), along with a safe place for students to learn. Through education, training, and development, local communities can be equipped to move from poverty to prosperity.

Miss Ulfat, a teacher at a remote village school, shares, "I have been teaching at

this school for the past seven years. When I first joined, I faced many challenges, and the community was not accepting us as female teachers. Despite the hardships and community pressures, I never gave up. Over time, I have witnessed an important transformation in both the men and women of this community. They are now more welcoming and have realized the importance of education. Today they are grateful for our services and often invite us to their homes.

"I am truly thankful for the opportunity to serve this less fortunate community. I have also benefited personally. My salary has allowed me to support and educate my siblings. My brother now works for a company, and my sister is a teacher. I am



Through education, training, and development, local communities can be equipped to move from poverty to prosperity.

committed to serving this school and the program for many more years. I am again so grateful to you all for your help to this community and us." •

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TOUCH POINT

SPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Operation Mercy has worked to develop sport programmes that support the inclusion of people with disabilities and help male refugees to manage their behaviour and families. The programmes also help young people to gain confidence and to have the mindset to undertake vocational training or studies in order to avoid unemployment.

A sport and development programme is currently being run in **Jordan and North Macedonia**, and it is also a subcomponent in many community health and community-based rehabilitation programmes in **Iraq, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan** and other countries where we work.



JORDAN

Contributing to Community

Many unemployed men end up spending a lot of time at home doing nothing. Feeling isolated, they often have too much coffee and tobacco, too little exercise, and not enough socialising where they can share their frustrations or deal with their traumatic experiences.

Keystone offers a safe place for men from the vulnerable layers of society. Many of them are struggling with unemployment, poverty, lack of self-esteem, trauma etc., but Keystone gives these vulnerable men an opportunity to improve their physical, social, and mental health through exercise, group discussions and new supportive relationships. Keystone's physical activities and supportive relationships also have a



Keystone gives these vulnerable men an opportunity to improve their physical, social, and mental health

multiplying effect of positive behaviours in other areas of life, most often immediately experienced by the families of these men.

Dr Esam has been one of the most committed members of our groups. He has become like an unofficial volunteer

staff member, always looking for ways to serve and help the group. He takes attendance, participates in the discussions, and encourages the other men. Dr Esam is trained as a dentist, but he is not allowed to work here in Jordan. He offered to lead an extra session on dental hygiene and oral health for the group. He did a great job and the group appreciated his session very much. He was so happy for the opportunity to share his expertise and contribute in his own unique way to the community. •

NORTH MACEDONIA

Human Capital

The World Bank's most recent diagnostic of North Macedonia records one of the worst development of human capital records in Europe, where N.E.E.T. (youth who are Not in Education, Employment or Training) levels run very high. Within this context, the north of Skopje, the capital city, possesses some of the worst educational outcomes within North Macedonia.

This is the background to Operation Mercy's engagement for youth through football (soccer):

Our project has valued the boys from the poorest neighbourhood, many of whom do not have a chance to play with a club

due to lack of money or connections. Others have socialisation issues or carry too much weight.

In Spring 2025 Marcos*, a professional football coach from Paraguay, held a football camp with us for our regular football kids. The camp also offered training to our sports trainers, to provide a simple format of skills, life skills, game practice, and feedback. For a place with so little resourcing and inputs, the teaching provided a welcome equipping for our coaches, who have been holding training sessions three times a week after school. Other exercises offered new experiences for the boys: football golf, overhead ball balancing, clap-speed-reaction drills and dragon-team-ball-snatching games

... the teaching provided a welcome equipping for our coaches

offered a lot of fun as well and skills development. As for life skills, teamwork, communication, perseverance, emotional self-control, and discipline were all on the curriculum, and it helped that our visiting trainer was a genuine South American football coach.

Marcos was chuffed to be found recently on social media by one of the kids from the camp. How did he find him? He did not know, but the boy remembered the experience of that week and had questions about a Barcelona-Real Madrid game.



... school grades have improved over the course of their participation

After his trip, Marcos described “moments of connection” with the young players. He wrote, “It was a very meaningful experience for me... I felt truly blessed to be able to encourage them... I was deeply encouraged... I believe this opened the door for future visits and collaboration.”

The football camp also saw us say goodbye to a cohort of participants, who had been with our school club for three years from age 11 to 14, and for

whom it was now time to graduate from the programme. Many have attended three times a week, and a measure of the programme’s impact has been that school grades have improved over the course of their participation. Another positive impact is improved behaviour, and another has been developing leadership, which is displayed by the oldest to the youngest. We see these as indicators to what happens when there is investment in lives, and when human value is recognised.

A recent evaluation of the kids showed a few of them wanting to be professional football players. Who knows if this will be a reality, but the club helps build the likelihood that these kids will later see themselves as candidates for vocational training and employment, and not for N.E.E.T. or the darker destinies of drugs and daggers in the enclave. •

** Name changed*

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