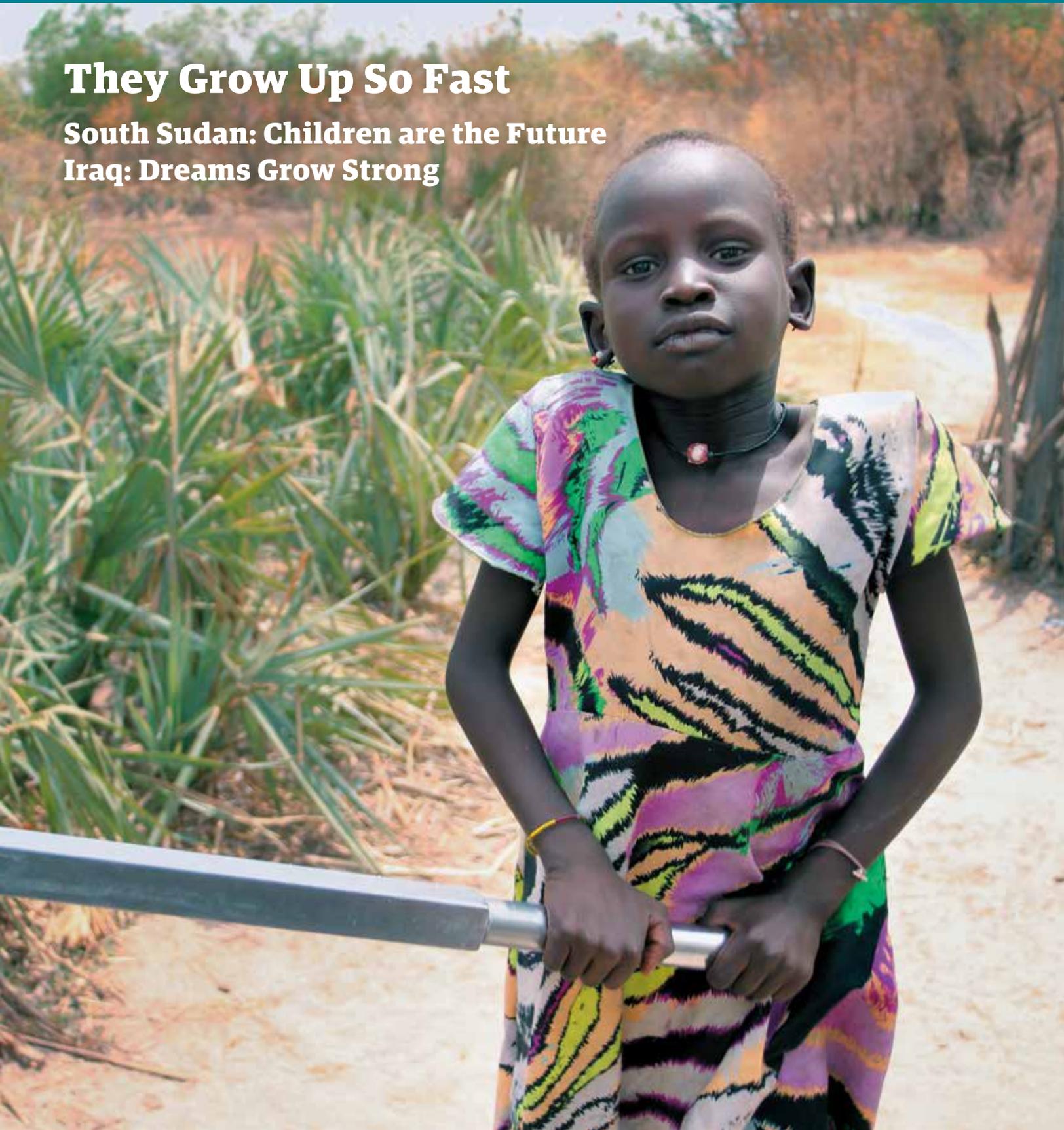


MEDAIR | news

They Grow Up So Fast

South Sudan: Children are the Future

Iraq: Dreams Grow Strong



They Grow Up So Fast

In this edition of Medair News, we explore the stories and needs of children and youth who are growing up in the midst of crisis. Even against the backdrop of conflict and disaster, they retain what it is to be a child: make-shift soccer pitches appear in dusty corners of refugee settlements; piles of rubble are transformed into castles and the sites of treasure hunts; little smiles with loose and missing teeth welcome a friendly new face. But how does living through trauma and tragedy impact young lives? It forces them to grow up fast. Too fast.

These children have endured life's greatest sufferings at far too tender an age, and are more susceptible to the risks associated with living in disaster and crisis zones. Therefore, they need additional protections from these risks, which often include: malnutrition and disease combined with a lack of access to health care or medicine; suffering single or repeated trauma; sexual violence and abuse; early marriage and motherhood; being the caregiver to other family members and working to support the family; and discrimination and lack of access to education in host communities.

This Medair News takes a look at some of the ways Medair's programs help children and youth not only cope with and survive crisis but also build resiliency. Nearly half of all child deaths are linked to malnutrition which is preventable. This fact spurs us to continue doing what we do, to seek out and serve the most vulnerable people. This is why we need and deeply value your continued support to help us save these precious lives.

Finally, we'll take a moment to thank Jim Ingram for his fourteen years of service and leadership. And we'll welcome David Verboom as Medair's new CEO. We're thrilled to have him at the helm – and you'll be hearing more from him in the future!

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Sources: 1. Levels and Trends in Child Mortality. UNICEF. 2017. 2. Uprooted: The growing crisis for refugee and migrant children. UNICEF. 2016. 3. A Child is a Child: Protecting children on the move from violence, abuse, and exploitation. UNICEF. 2017. 4. South Sudan – The impact of the crisis on children. UNICEF. 2017.

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Cover Photo: A girl pumps water in a remote, insecure region of South Sudan. ©Medair/Diana Gorter

Daniel Xu
Director, Medair US



COPING WITH DISASTER



Kafai (center, third from right) waits to receive assistance in Bangladesh.

At 16, Kafai survived conflict in Myanmar. Two of his younger brothers, however, did not. They were shot and killed while the family was fleeing.

Kafai made it to safety in Bangladesh with his mother, father, and one-year-old brother. When we spoke with him, they had just received shelter and hygiene kits.

Kafai was trying to be strong, to care for his family even as he struggled to cope with the horrors he had lived through. As we sat with him, he shared what was on his heart.

“The journey here was so bad. I saw so many bad things. So many people fleeing. We had to take a boat. I can swim, but my parents cannot. We saw a boat sink and all the people drowned. We were very scared.

Two of my brothers died on the journey. I feel so bad about it. **I'm hurt, I cry, I want to see them again.** Back home, we played football and we went everywhere together. We were very happy. Now they are gone.

I can do nothing here. I don't even know if there is a school here. I would like to study. I would like to become a doctor, to serve the people who are sick.”



More than 4,500 Rohingya families, including Kafai's, have received shelter and hygiene kits distributed by World Concern with the support of Medair.

Subash, 16, had to grow up fast in the mountains of Nepal. His father died when he was three, and at the age of twelve, he and his younger brother were abandoned by their mother.

Two years later, the earthquake struck, destroying the home where Subash and his brother lived.

With the help of Medair and our local partner, CDS, Subash began working with a group of neighbors who were also reconstructing their homes. After receiving a grant from Medair, Subash began rebuilding his home with the help of masons trained in earthquake-resilient construction. "Thanks to Medair and CDS, I know that I am building a safe house!"

Subash aims to finish construction on their new house soon.

"This house will be a gift for me and my brother," said Subash. "I am dependent on others now, but I want to earn an income and look after my brother. Those are my two priorities in life."



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Forced to Grow Up too Fast

Imagine you have no choice but to abandon your home and flee from violence. You see family members die, you lose dear friends and neighbors. You emerge in a strange place and try to survive on your own without your possessions.

Now imagine doing that as a child. You'd grow up fast, whether you like it or not.

Children grow up too fast when they...

- Live in a conflict zone or a displacement/refugee camp
- Live in a drought-stricken area with little nourishment
- Suffer from trauma and grief
- Suffer abuse and exploitation
- Cope with the loss of parents and other family members, and must become caregivers and income earners



28 million children are forcibly displaced

2x more child refugees over past 10 years

Nearly half of all child refugees are from **Syria and Afghanistan.**

Source: The Growing Crisis for Refugee and Migrant Children. UNICEF. 2016.

Now We Have Water

In the Central Highlands of Afghanistan, some children spend hours every day collecting water, often facing dangerous journeys over rough and frozen terrain. Medair is helping to change that.

Our teams provide remote Afghan communities with safe and easily accessible sources of water:



“I fell so many times. One day I went with my sister for water, and we fell into the snow and disappeared up to our chests. If we would have fallen deeper, no one would have found us. Our uncle heard our cries and rescued us from the snow. There are dogs and wolves in the winter that could eat us. I’m so happy now—I can fetch water during the day!”
– Mohammed, 7



“I broke my leg when I fetched water. Now I can get water myself easily. It is right behind our house.”
– Nadira, Mohammed’s little sister

“The biggest problem we had is solved,” said Niaz, Mohammed and Nadira’s father. “We will be happy till the end of our lives, since we now have water.”

THREATS FACING CHILDREN IN CRISIS

Hunger and malnutrition (nearly half of all child deaths are linked to malnutrition)

Preventable illness and disease, including waterborne disease from unsafe water and poor hygiene

Lack of education or opportunities for the future

More likely to marry at a young age and become pregnant while still an adolescent

Vulnerable to sexual violence, abuse, and exploitation

Working as child labor for little income. Getting money in unsavory ways

Time-consuming responsibilities at home leave little time for anything else

YOUR GIFTS HELP CHILDREN IN CRISIS



Somalia

Nutrition treatment for malnourished children under the age of five



Iraq

Psychosocial care to help people of all ages cope with trauma



Madagascar

Safe water for children in isolated communities

Dreams Grow Strong

Dancing to Shakira and playing sports with her friends are two of Lamia’s favorite things to do, along with going to school and cooking with her mother. Does that sound familiar? Of course! Lamia is like so many other nine-year-old girls around the world.

Lamia lives in a tent in Iraq, in a camp with more than 4,000 people, far from the home she loved in Hawiga. Conflict forced her family to flee here more than a year ago. She is making the best of it, but her life has become much more difficult.

“I want to be a doctor,” says Lamia, smiling from ear to ear. Her mother, Samira, is a volunteer with Medair’s health team, and Lamia often joins her as she visits people in their tents to teach them how to keep their families healthy.



“All of my daughters are very motivated,” says Samira. “They know that life has been very difficult and we must take advantage of every opportunity to study. For two years they were not able to go to school but here in the camp they can have an education. I am very hopeful for them.”

"This Crisis Made Our Children Adults"

When conflict came to her home in Syria, Saadya fled on foot with her grandson, Fadyeh. Her son, daughter-in-law, and three youngest grandchildren tried to escape by car but were stopped by an armed group.

The daughter-in-law yelled to her daughters to duck behind the front seats for cover. Her cry saved their lives. Taghreed and Sadye were the only ones in the car to survive that day.

Their neighbors found the two girls and brought them to their grandmother and brother who were hiding at

a nearby farm. The grieving survivors fled to Jordan and lived in an apartment with one of Saadya's other sons, but then he was sent back to Syria.

With nothing but their dwindling savings to live on, Fadyeh, 17, felt he should start working to help the family. But he knew working could lead to his and his family's deportation to Syria. It was an impossible decision. "This crisis has made our children adults," says Saadya.

When Medair met Saadya and her grandchildren, we began giving them a monthly cash payment to help cover urgent needs like rent and medical bills.

The cash support means Fadyeh does not need to work illegally. While it doesn't solve all of their problems, it provides a reprieve from the constant stress of struggling to survive that they have felt since leaving Syria.

"We want to thank you for not forgetting us."

i Beyond the physical needs of surviving and starting over, many refugees carry the trauma of what they have endured before fleeing their homelands and what they continue to endure as refugees.

In Jordan, your gifts provide vulnerable families with cash assistance, psychosocial support, and cash vouchers to cover health care costs.



Fadyeh (17), Taghreed (11), and Sadye (13) live with their grandmother, Saadya, in a small apartment in Amman, Jordan.

When Children Marry...

At age 14, Maram married a 19-year-old man and moved in with his family. She soon became pregnant.

We met her at a Medair workshop for Syrian refugee women about gender-based violence, early marriage, and other crucial issues.

"I asked Maram if I could visit her," said We'am, Medair relief worker, "and her eyes filled with tears and she started trembling with fear."

"You must ask my mother-in-law, Nuha," said Maram. "Please do not mention that you talked to me."

Nuha had made Maram's life miserable. She had to wake up early to clean the house, prepare the meals, and host the guests. "I feel like a servant to the family," Maram said.

A month after the workshop, we visited Nuha and Maram. "When I entered the house, I saw Maram. Her eyes were sparkling and a big smile was on her face," said We'am.

"After the workshop, my mother-in-law turned around 180 degrees," said Maram. "She is now much better to me, treating me as if I were her daughter."



"In South Sudan... children have become the face of a humanitarian tragedy fuelled by conflict and economic collapse. An entire generation of children is at stake as they face death, injury, hunger, disease, recruitment, forced displacement, and loss of schooling." — UNICEF, Dec. 2017

Children Are the Future

South Sudan's children bear the scars of a conflict that continues to tear their country apart. Children repeatedly flee from danger; they lose loved ones; face hunger, malnutrition, and drink unsafe water; and grow up without schooling. It takes a severe toll on the physical and emotional well-being of millions of the country's children.

In South Sudan, Medair provides hundreds of thousands of children with health services, treatment for malnutrition, emergency shelter, essential household items, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services.

In a remote, insecure region of South Sudan, Medair operates Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) at three clinics, which provide a safe place for children to play and learn while receiving treatment. Here children can listen to stories, play soccer, and jump rope. CFS give children a place to escape the harsh reality of their lives, a place to begin to heal, a place to be children.

In Maban County, boys play soccer in the heat of the day using a ball they made out of plastic and string. They set up goal posts using bottles and shoes, and fill the air with their shouts of frustration and victory.



“In South Sudan, the children cry, scream, play, laugh, eat, drink, and throw tantrums just like children the world over. But there is a sadness that hits me hard. Children have so little. They scrape every last bit of Plumpy'Nut out of a sachet because they are so hungry. They walk long distances, often carrying a younger sibling, with no shoes or broken shoes. They don't all have the opportunity to attend school. Many are very ill and malnourished. **It breaks my heart to see the future of South Sudan limping ahead to what appears to be nothing positive.** Yet the support Medair provides to suffering children greatly improves their chances to heal. There is hope in the sadness.”

— Sarah Robinson, Medair relief worker

“If you spent a day in an informal settlement in the Bekaa Valley, you would notice a lot of children just playing outside their tents. Informal settlements are not a healthy place for children to grow up; they can easily get ill or get hurt because they don't have a proper place to play.”

– George Mghames, Medair Lebanon



“Syrian refugee children don't often have the chance to be children. They are often expected to work illegally to help provide the family with food. Some sell small goods such as bubble gum and trinkets along busy roads or in marketplaces. Others wash dishes in restaurants, or undertake back-breaking agricultural work in fields. I met a girl in the Bekaa Valley who couldn't have been older than 16, her baby cradled in her arms. 'I never had a childhood,' she said.”

– Lucy Bamforth, Medair, Middle East Region

“I see a lot of children who aren't in the typical photographs released by aid agencies. Those photographs tend to communicate raw need (such as skeletally thin children) or pitch for 'cuteness appeal' (girls with radiant smiles or fluffy-haired babies). The children I meet do not generally conform to these stereotypes.

Their lives are often tough—they may be undernourished, lack opportunities to go to school, or need to fetch water and work in their family's fields. They go through the same phases of sadness and stubbornness that children go through anywhere. They also enjoy time with their friends—the chance to laugh, play games, and be curious about the world around them—even if these escapes are temporary.”

– Pete Harrison, Medair DR Congo



“Children are not only the future, they are also the present. By educating them, we encourage them to have a positive influence and bring about change within their families. It is so important to invest in children.”

– Ketsia Bonnaz, Medair Madagascar

Jim Ingram, Medair CEO, Passes the Torch to David Verboom



Jim Ingram, of Canada, is married and a grandfather several times over. After studying economics, he began his career with the Canadian government before moving to Switzerland where he served with L'Abri Fellowship Foundation and then with Medair.

Since his arrival at Medair in 2004, Jim played an influential role in the life of the organization. His expertise and experience enabled him to become an essential contributor to Medair's growth and vision. After working in several positions in the Finance Department, he was promoted to Finance Director before becoming CEO in June 2011.

Greatly appreciated for his wisdom, humility, and insight, Jim deftly guided and supported Medair's growth. During his seven years at the helm of Medair, he navigated the organization through a restructuring while remaining focused on improving the quality of our services to people in crisis by developing innovative tools and more efficient processes. To Medair and the wider humanitarian aid sector's great benefit, Jim valued partnership, and was named President of EU-CORD, a network of European Christian Relief and Development NGOs, and served as a member of the Foundation Counsel of Swiss Solidarity.

Jim decided to retire to spend more time with his wife, Gail, and his family. We at Medair extend our deepest thanks to Jim for his dedication, motivation, and untiring engagement on behalf of the world's most vulnerable!



David Verboom, a native of the Netherlands, is married and the father to three teenagers. An experienced manager, he has 20 years of humanitarian field experience that includes responding to the major global crises of recent years.

A graduate of the Twente School of Management, David earned his Master of Business Administration in 1992. He worked for four years in management consulting before embarking on a career in humanitarian aid and development with several NGOs (Medair, ZOA Refugee Care, World Vision) and with the European Union's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid department.

David began his career in humanitarian aid with Medair as Country Director for Kenya and Southern Sudan. He then took up the Operational Director's role at our Swiss headquarters. In this capacity, he initiated Medair's Quality Improvement process, which resulted in Medair becoming the first humanitarian agency to become ISO 9001 certified. This application of international quality standards to the humanitarian sector was novel by defining disaster and crisis-affected people as Medair's primary clients.

Medair's International Board of Trustees unanimously voted to handover to David the responsibility of leading the organization as CEO. David's experience and leadership skills complement his commitment to Medair's values, and are the qualities needed to guide Medair in the years to come as the organization adapts to inevitable changes in the humanitarian landscape and responds in increasingly relevant ways to the growing needs of the most vulnerable.

Would you like to send a thank you message to Jim Ingram or a note of welcome to David Verboom?



You may send your message at medair.org/CEO or by mailing a letter to: Medair, CEO Message, Chemin du Croset 9, 1024 Ecublens, Switzerland



You can't pack **hope** into a relief kit, but you can give children the practical help they need to save or sustain their lives. Only when a future seems possible, can hope begin to return.



Give a child a chance at life.

Life-saving aid. Life-giving support.

Your gift brings life and hope: donate.medair.org



"We want to be doctors in the future to help the war-wounded," says Sujood, 9, Syrian refugee in Jordan. "I want to work with Medair so I can help people like you do," adds Malak, 7.



PRIMARY HEALTH CARE + MEDICINES



VACCINATIONS AGAINST DISEASES



SAFE DRINKING WATER



NUTRITIOUS FOOD + MALNUTRITION TREATMENT



SANITARY LATRINES WITH DOORS THAT LOCK



BASIC HYGIENE PRACTICES THAT SAVE LIVES



CARE FOR INFANTS AND PREGNANT/BREASTFEEDING WOMEN



EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT



SHELTER THAT PROTECTS AGAINST THE ELEMENTS



ESSENTIAL SHELTER ITEMS



CASH SUPPORT



PSYCHOSOCIAL COUNSELLING

Medair's Child Protection Policy sets out a clear framework of minimum expectations for all Medair staff in order to help protect children from abuse, exploitation, and negligence.

Why I Work for Medair?

Sarah Eggert of Ames, Iowa, received her B.A. in International Relations from Drake University and her M.A. in regional planning and disaster management from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. She first joined Medair in 2012 as part of the DR Congo team. For the next two years she worked in various locations across DR Congo in several positions ranging from Finance and HR Officer to Project Support Manager. In 2017, after taking time away to complete her M.A., Sarah returned to Medair and joined the Myanmar team, where she currently serves as the Country Representative.

Tell us about yourself.

I was born in Istanbul, Turkey (to American parents) but spent most of my childhood and early adult life in Iowa. People always seem surprised when they find out I am from the Midwest, as there is a misperception that the people there aren't very globally minded or are too busy farming to be aware of or interested in global affairs.

My experience growing up in Iowa couldn't be more opposite to those stereotypes (although my summers as a teenager were spent working in the cornfields). I grew up in a family and a community that was welcoming to people of other countries, whether they were refugees or international students, and attended schools whose teachers and professors encouraged us students to explore and be curious about the world outside the US. It felt natural to move abroad after I graduated from college, inspired to seek work in humanitarian aid from the values such as faith, compassion, hard work and kindness that were instilled in me from growing up as an Iowan.

Why do you work for Medair?

I feel really grateful to work for a faith-based organization that is committed to partnering with communities affected by conflict or natural hazards to decrease vulnerability through meeting basic needs. The willingness of my colleagues all around the world to do what it takes to access those in need in difficult and hard-to-reach places is a huge inspiration to me; the



people I work with directly and indirectly are really my motivation for continuing to work for Medair.

What is something you have learned while working with Medair?

Before I came to Myanmar, I thought going the extra mile only meant being in a remote location with limited access to basic necessities. From our experience here, however, in a place that has a long history of being closed off to the rest of the world, going the extra mile means making the effort to understand the complex history and culture and how it affects the country today, being actively patient and persistent, and having a long-term vision to avoid being discouraged about the restricted access to vulnerable communities. It also means being creative, proactive, and innovative to find ways to keep moving forward towards our calling to relieve suffering and reduce risks associated with natural hazards here in Myanmar.

What do you miss most about home when in the field? What will you miss most about the field when you are home?

When I am in the field, it is easy to miss a sense of familiarity of place and comfort that comes from being at home. But when I'm home, I miss the feeling of constantly being stretched and challenged from being outside of my comfort zone!

What keeps you going back to the field?

I was first drawn to the job because of my faith and desire to join others working to relieve human suffering, and both of these remain to be my motivation five years later. I keep coming back to the field because I can't think of anything better than being part of a multi-cultural team of people dedicated to working together with vulnerable communities to meet basic needs and reduce risks associated with natural hazards.

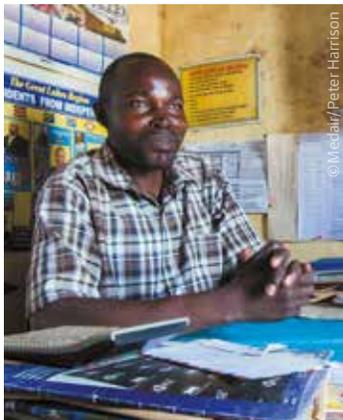
THANK YOU!

© Medair/Peter Harrison



Thank You from DR Congo

Jean de Dieu (photo below) is the headmaster of a primary school in Ituri Province, DR Congo, where more than 1,000 children are students. Before Medair started working with the school, there were just 18 latrines for all of the students to share.



“Your work has been a great improvement for this school. You helped us construct new latrines, and the school community came together to help out with the construction. Our toilet facilities were insufficient before, but now we have enough. You also helped us construct a rainwater harvesting system so that water is available for handwashing. It’s already complete—we’re really happy with that.

We had a policy of washing hands after using the toilet, but Medair explained to the children the reasons why it’s important to be really vigilant about this, and the children are now adhering to the policy much more closely. We are really happy to see you here. Thank you!”



Give a child a chance... Your gift brings life!
Give now or give monthly at donate.medair.org

