

Crisis in Syria: Save the Children Urgently Seeking \$4 Million for Relief for Children Affected by Aleppo Fighting

December 19, 2016

"Children in East Aleppo are injured, distressed, malnourished and weak. They are hiding during the day from the ongoing attacks and facing below freezing temperatures at night, with no fuel to keep warm. They must be evacuated today, without any further delays, to areas where we can reach them with aid and support."

-- Nick Finney, Save the Children's North-West Syria Country Director

The Emergency

Save the Children and its partners in Syria's Aleppo Governorate are today providing humanitarian relief to exhausted and overwhelmed children and families fleeing the shattered city of Aleppo after enduring months of brutal conflict.

With evacuations under way, some 4,500 civilians were able to leave opposition-controlled areas of eastern Aleppo today, joining some 8,000 others who had previously fled the fighting in Aleppo for the safety of the surrounding rural areas.

However, the situation remains extremely fluid, and thousands more people are still waiting to be evacuated, according to the chair of the United Nations' aid task force in Syria. They include children who remain in grave danger and face shortages of food, water, shelter from freezing temperatures, medical care and protection from further harm. Those leaving Aleppo are arriving in



Two children huddle in a street in Aleppo.

Save the Children Photo

reception areas outside the city with just what they can carry.

Our donors have responded to our Syria Children's Relief Fund with compassion and generosity, which is helping Save the Children and our partners reach displaced children and families as soon as they arrive in reception points outside of Aleppo. However, given the need and the projections that displacements will continue, we are urgently seeking \$4 million for our humanitarian mission in northwest Syria in the next six weeks.

Your contribution will be pooled with other resources for such assistance as "ready-to-eat"

food rations, kits of winter clothing and related supplies, shelter kits, and heaters and fuel for families. Your funding will also help with mobile health clinics, help families purchase needed supplies, and to assist struggling families who have taken in orphaned children.

This initial support is a component of our larger strategy to reach vulnerable families in both the immediate and longer-term. Overall, we are seeking to provide a protective environment where families have access to basic services and can restore their livelihoods. For this longer-term work, we are seeking \$28 million.

Save the Children is also continuing to call for the immediate transfer of injured, orphaned and separated children from Aleppo to safe areas.

The Impact on Children

Displaced children are facing extreme deprivation and, having spent months inside besieged Aleppo, where they were exposed to daily and indiscriminate shelling and airstrikes, a future that's fragile and fraught with uncertainty.

We know that a significant number of children require urgent medical treatment. Innumerable girls and boys witnessed atrocities and are dealing with the trauma of losing family members. Thousands of children are believed to still be in Aleppo, some of whom are with their parents, and some are alone, having been orphaned or separated from their families in the chaos.

The onset of winter also poses a major risk to children regardless of whether they are displaced or remain in Aleppo. There's a shortage of adequate shelter from the frigid weather, and children need winter clothing, hot meals and heat to avoid becoming ill.

Our Response

Save the Children has worked with and through partner organizations inside Syria since 2012.

Over the past several months, we prepared for a possible large-scale movement of up to 100,000 children and families out of Aleppo to non-government-controlled areas – and we also planned for a possible response in Aleppo once the fighting ends.

With our partners in the Aleppo Governorate, we are now providing humanitarian aid as displaced people arrive in reception areas. We are expecting that 1,000 to 2,000 families will be arriving every day for at least the next week. Our partners are able to move quickly and effectively so that very vulnerable children and families have the immediate support they need while recovering from the evacuation and determining where they will go next. Our support to them includes:

- Distributing our pre-positioned stocks of “ready-to-eat” rations and food baskets. Over 5,000 children and adults have already benefited; each food basket contains enough pre-cooked or processed food for a family of five for about four days.
- Distributing kits of winter clothing and other materials and hygiene supplies.
- Operating health programs. Ambulances are transporting people who require urgent care from reception sites to nearby hospitals. One of our partners has a medical team that we support stationed at the Aqrabat hospital to provide medical assistance, and nutritional and psychosocial support to women and children.
- Distributing multi-purpose cash grants to families, which they can redeem for food and vital supplies. Some 2,300 families have been registered so far, and we will distribute the grants this week. We are ready to expand this work to other areas.
- Providing additional supplies to the 8 health care centers Save the Children supports in the area to treat newly-arriving people.
- Providing additional learning materials to the 60 area schools Save the Children supports, so that they are ready to accommodate an influx of new children.

- Our partner in the Sarmada reception site is the lead relief agency there.

With your support, one of our partners has also established four reception centers in the city of Ariha to host displaced families and help them find shelter. The centers have both “ready-to-eat” food rations and other relief supplies on hand, but are still in need of heaters and fuel to distribute to families who have no way to keep warm.

In response to information that unaccompanied children and children from orphanages are being evacuated, we have been preparing and translating simple child protection checklists, guidance and registration materials for partners that may come into contact with separated or unaccompanied children. We are following up on the information we have received.

As the situation evolves, Save the Children is ready to support thousands more children with food and medical care and to protect them from harm. We and our partners are also prepared to provide distressed children with psychosocial support, such as our Child-friendly Spaces; and preventing children from being separated from their families. And, we are also prepared to move quickly to help meet the needs of those from Aleppo who decide to continue to travel on to the city of Idlib.

Should conditions and security allow, our partners may also resume programming in the city of Aleppo itself to address critical needs of children whose families remain. Those programs were suspended on December 9.

We have delivered a wide range of aid to Syrians trapped in their war-torn country, continuously providing health and hygiene services, food and nutrition resources, psychosocial support and protection, and restoring children’s access to education.

With and through our partners, we have run vital health and child nutrition services in the West Aleppo Governorate and Idlib; our 8 health care centers (including one maternity hospital) have been the only source of primary health care in these two contested areas. An average of 20,000 individuals, mostly children and women, have received health services at these facilities every month. We also ran 13 schools in Aleppo through a partner, serving thousands of children, and supported food security programs.

Why Save the Children?

Save the Children is the world’s leading independent child-focused humanitarian organization. We have nearly 100 years’ experience responding to children and their families during and after crises. We are exceptional among aid agencies because we provide comprehensive emergency readiness, relief and recovery programs that are specifically designed to meet the unique needs of children.

Since the beginning of our humanitarian response to the crisis in Syria, Save the Children and our partners have worked tirelessly to reach internally displaced children and adults in the country, and to alleviate the needs of Syrian refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. To date, we have reached 5.1 million children and adults inside Syria and Syrian refugees in the Middle East.

Nobody knows when the next crisis will strike. That's why 10 percent of your generous gift goes to helping our emergency teams prepare for and provide critical assistance when and where children need us the most.