



## Multifaith Alliance for Syrian Refugees

### The Syrian Humanitarian Crisis: Guide for Philanthropists

The Syrian refugee crisis, now in its 7<sup>th</sup> year, is considered the worst humanitarian crisis of our time. The response from the international community has been inadequate to meet the great needs of Syrian war victims. The worsening situation inside Syria and the shifting political landscape in the U.S. and Europe present a great demand for a broad range of responses from different sectors in society. Over the next four years, among the changes we can expect are: a possible shutdown of Syrian refugee entry into the U.S.; a decrease in funding for refugee agencies; and a perceived bolstering of the Assad regime due to U.S. diplomatic withdrawal and new relationships with Russia, triggering an increase in Syrian refugees massing at the borders, and in Turkey and Europe. Therefore, going forward, we can expect a critically larger role for civil society groups and for private philanthropy. With 5.1 million registered Syrian refugees and 13.5 million people in Syria in need of humanitarian assistance, the time to act is now.

There are many areas where philanthropists can play a crucial role in addressing funding gaps:

- Humanitarian Aid
  - UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency, currently has a 44% funding gap to meet their target for 2016. Support organizations and NGOs that are working on the ground, in the areas bearing the brunt of the refugee crisis—Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Greece—to address the immediate needs of Syrian refugees: food, clothing, shelter and hygiene.
  - Support efforts that meet the specific needs of the most vulnerable groups, such as LGBT refugees, women and children—women and children make up about 80% of the Syrian refugee population.
  - Help support the cash economy in the refugee camps through microgrants that help Syrians start small businesses.
  - Support cash card programs, such as those researched by the International Rescue Committee. These are proven to help keep children in school rather than working to support their families, maintain dignity and enhance nutrition. And, for every \$1 given to a refugee, \$2.13 circulates in the economy. Learn more: <https://www.rescue.org/report/emergency-economies-impact-cash-assistance-lebanon>.
- Integration/Resettlement
  - There are currently more than 15,000 Syrian refugees in the U.S. Support the nine voluntary resettlement agencies—the majority of which are faith-based—



and their local partners in their work to provide for the needs of Syrians resettled in the U.S.

- The U.S. government provides monetary support to refugees for only three months, making early self-sufficiency, rather than long-term integration, the focus of resettlement in the U.S. The five pillars of successful resettlement are housing, jobs, education, language training and trauma counseling. Find out where Syrians are being resettled (states with the greatest numbers include California, Michigan, Texas, Arizona and Pennsylvania) and support organizations working locally to meet these needs. Find your local resettlement organizations: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/state-programs-annual-overview>.
- Now that the pipeline of resettlement candidates and acceptances is finally full, there is a mismatch between demand for services and the available supply in the cities that are accepting the most refugees (e.g. San Diego). There is an urgent need for affordable housing, trauma services and medical care. For those in states with governors that are refusing to resettle Syrian refugees, private funds will be needed to replace the state funds that may be cut.
- Encourage the formation of Welcome Committees to on-board Syrian refugees.
- Sponsor a Syrian refugee family, providing housing, mentoring, and support for one year.
- **Advocacy/Messaging**
  - Support efforts that counter the misinformation and disinformation about Syrian refugees, responding to the three great fears that hinder sensible and humane policies: economic impact, terrorism, and Islamophobia. Research shows that with the right messaging, public opinion can shift. Learn the surprising facts: <http://www.multifaithalliance.org/myths-and-facts>.
  - Fund media projects that lift up Syrian voices.
  - Support advocacy efforts around specific policies regarding refugee processing and aid.
- **Research**
  - Support research initiatives, such as public opinion surveys on Syrian refugees and data that shed light on the contributions of Syrians in the U.S.
  - Support a survey on the effectiveness of the refugee program that identifies areas for improvement in the resettlement process and integration efforts.
  - Fund research into alternative programs to resettle Syrian refugees, such as a private sponsorship program, which, if implemented, would be another opportunity for the philanthropic sector to get involved.
  - The faith-based community is in the front-line of on-boarding refugees. Support a survey of how faith-based institutions are responding to the Syrian refugee



crisis and identify best practices that can be disseminated to all those that are looking for **effective** ways to get involved.

- There is a dearth of longitudinal research on resettled refugees and their life trajectories in their new homes. Such data are an important foundation for rational public policy.
- Support MFA
  - The Multifaith Alliance for Syrian Refugees serves as a coordinating body, a network and a vehicle for harnessing the power of the faith-based and civil society collective on behalf of Syrian war victims. MFA's activities cut across all the sectors listed above. To donate: <http://www.multifaithalliance.org/donate>.