



Hope from the Americas & Around the World



Excellencies, Dear Confreres and Consoeurs:

As we start off 2024, we want to thank you for all of your support in helping us tirelessly serve the sick and the poor, which has been our mission since the very beginning.

We started our first project in Colombia exactly 10 years ago this year - at the invitation of the Colombian Association - providing healthcare for Indigenous communities in a remote hamlet in the Sierra Nevada. Now, all these years later and thanks to you, we're providing support in La Guajira, the country's northernmost region, supporting entire health sectors expand access to the millions of vulnerable women, children, and their families fleeing from Venezuela.

Around the world, our colleagues are working on continuing support to the thousands of victims of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake in Türkiye and Syria in February 2023. Nearly two years' on after the start of the war in Ukraine, our support has not stopped.

Haiti's situation continues to prove difficult, as security concerns threaten daily life and the safety of nearly everyone. Nonetheless, our staff members in rural areas persevere whenever and however possible.



Here at home, the wildfires in Hawaii's Lahaina were devastating, and it's thanks to you that we've been able to support those most affected as they continue to rebuild their lives.

2023 saw all parts of the world struggle to find support, but your dedication to serving the sick and the poor at home and abroad proves that we're able to make a positive difference together.

JOHN MCINERNEY III, KM, PRESIDENT

For more information, please visit our website at www.orderofmaltarelief.org, and follow us on social media.

International Dispatch: One Year after the earthquake in Syria & Türkiye

A year after the devastating earthquake in the border region between Syria and Türkiye, more than three million people remain displaced, living in makeshift shelters or tents. In northwestern Syria, the absence of state structures to coordinate reconstruction efforts has left a void, hindering the rebuilding process. The situation is further compounded by dwindling international funding, which has reduced UN aid, exacerbating food shortages and deepening the humanitarian crisis.

Lena Schellhammer, Malteser International's Program Manager for Syria and Türkiye recently visited the earthquake-affected areas and describes the situation.

"In the Syrian city of Afrin, it's almost as if the earthquake happened yesterday. What I saw shocked me: damaged houses still stand uninhabitable on the streets, next to the tents and containers for those who have lost their homes. People sought refuge in this region believing they could escape the war, but the earthquake stripped them of even the little they had left."

Malteser International's partner organizations, including the Al-Dana maternity clinic run by local organization SAMS, are witnessing a surge in parents seeking assistance for their malnourished children. "This deeply concerns us," Schellhammer emphasizes, "and we are now expanding our support to include initiatives that help communities cultivate fruits and vegetables, enabling them to achieve food self-sufficiency and generate income."

Malteser International has been actively supporting the people of northwest Syria since shortly after the outbreak of war in 2011, particularly in the realm of medical care.

Following the earthquake on February 6, 2023, the organization significantly expanded its humanitarian assistance.



One year after the earthquake, millions of people in Türkiye and Syria are still living in tents or containers. Photo: Malteser International

Partnering with local organizations, Malteser International is providing support to eight hospitals, basic health centers, and mobile medical teams. Additionally, they are ensuring access to clean drinking water and providing psychosocial support to those affected by the earthquake.

In the Turkish earthquake region, Malteser International, through local partner organizations, has distributed blankets, tents, and beds. To date, individuals injured in the earthquake continue to receive physiotherapy care. Moreover, starting in February, small entrepreneurs impacted by the earthquake will receive support on their way back to self-employment.

Haiti:

Taiwanese Embassy in Haiti Supports Empowering Fish Merchants



In Petit Trou de Nippes and Baradères, the Taiwanese Embassy is injecting hope into ecosystem preservation efforts. Their support targets women fish traders, reinforcing fishing as an economic alternative crucial for mangrove restoration. By funding solar-powered coolers, they offset economic losses caused by inadequate fish preservation methods. Coastal communities face substantial losses when fish are not sold quickly. Fish traders have long been looking for viable solutions to preserve their livelihoods.

Jasmine, a trader, voices hope, "I lose a lot of money when I can't preserve fish. I already see a lot of hope for us thanks to these donations that are coming." By preserving the mangroves, we protect the environment and the lives of local people, as well as the fish and other marine animals that are a source of income for many of the inhabitants. Beyond equipment, this initiative empowers fish merchants to benefit from gender and entrepreneurship training. This approach aims to empower them, by developing essential business management skills and fostering a balanced understanding of gender roles in the sector.

The decision to invest in solar-charged refrigerators and coolers underlines Malteser International Americas' commitment to sustainability. By using renewable energy sources, this project helps to mitigate the impact on the environment. Mangrove restoration aims for ecological balance and sustainable economic growth, offering shelter to marine life and shoreline protection. Funding from the Taiwanese Embassy follows the donation of two Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) by Malteser International Americas, which have already begun to attract an abundance of marine life. FADs not only improve fishing yields, but also promote the regeneration of fish stocks, ensuring the long-term viability of this resource. In a community where fishing remains the main income-generating activity, these combined initiatives aim to revive the economic dynamic while restoring the ecosystem. This multifaceted approach aims to revive the local economy while healing the ecosystem. The Taiwanese Embassy's funding is empowering fish merchants and exemplifies a sustainable vision. It demonstrates how inclusive solutions can revolutionize remote areas, shaping a more resilient future for coastal communities.

Colombia: Malteser International Americas Launches Initiative to Support Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants in Colombia



With support from the U.S. State Department and the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, we are proud to unveil our latest initiative aimed at improving the well-being and self-reliance of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, in La Guajira and Magdalena departments of Colombia. This project, titled "Improving the well-being and self-reliance of Venezuelan refugees and migrants and multi-ethnic host communities in La Guajira and Magdalena departments in Colombia," is scheduled to run from 2023 to 2025.

Colombia stands at the forefront of the refugee and migrant crisis originating from Venezuela, with millions of individuals seeking refuge and a brighter future. The Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) for 2023-2024 anticipates a population projection of up to 6.2 million people in need of support and assistance, underscoring the urgency of addressing this ongoing humanitarian challenge.

One of the primary objectives of this comprehensive project is to enhance access to healthcare, removing barriers and increasing access to primary and secondary healthcare services for refugees and migrants, as well as marginalized host communities.

Additionally, we at Malteser International Americas, are placing significant emphasis on mental health support as a critical component of overall well-being, with the goal of increasing access to mental health care services. Another pivotal aspect of the project is economic empowerment, recognizing its fundamental role in ensuring the long-term stability of refugees, migrants, and host communities. Lastly, the initiative aims to promote community participation and empowerment by fostering a safe, inclusive, and meaningful environment where all individuals can readily access information, available assistance, and essential services.

Malteser International Americas is pleased to collaborate closely with local partners and stakeholders to implement this essential project and make a positive impact on the lives of those affected by the Venezuelan migration crisis. We firmly believe that by addressing these key objectives, we can contribute significantly to the well-being, resilience, and self-reliance of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, as well as the diverse host communities in La Guajira and Magdalena.



MI Americas Welcomes New Board Members

We're thrilled to be welcoming two new members to our Board of Directors who will bring invaluable experience and guidance from a wide variety of fields. We hope their expertise will lead Malteser International Americas to new successes. Their terms began January 1, 2024 and will last 3 years.

H.E. Ambassador Dr. Paul Beresford-Hill, CBE, KM - Order of Malta
Ambassador to the United Nations Mission in New York
John G. Sylvia, KM - Western Association

We also extend a warm welcome to Sophia Loewenstein, DM, from Malteser International e.V., who joined the Board of Directors on November 8, 2023.