

# INTERNATIONAL HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY ASSOCIATION

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## **Help Avoid a COVID-19 Explosion Among Refugee Communities**

### **Urgent need for Syrian Refugee and COVID-19 Funding Support**

#### **THE IMMEDIATE NEED AND THREAT:**

The massive population of refugees in Jordan make up **one of the most vulnerable, high risk groups in the world for contracting, dying from, and rapidly spreading the COVID-19 virus** - within their population, and then further extending the pandemic beyond to the wider society and region.

The unique combination of risk factors that refugees face creates an immediate and potent formula threatening to produce a humanitarian catastrophe of even higher proportions than we are witnessing today, if we do not act quickly to help reduce this impact now.

- Like many countries, the entire society in Jordan is under strict mandate to remain at home and physical distance.
- The more than 1 million Syrian refugees in Jordan in particular are crowded into tightly packed living conditions with no ability to physical distance.
- There is a huge portion of the refugee population already suffering from profoundly compromised immune systems, fragile medical conditions, low resistance to infection, and general poor health.
- At the same time, the already significantly overstretched health care system in this poor country is struggling to meet even the minimum needs of it's own citizens, and refugees are unfortunately at a low priority even for these increasingly limited services. As a result their access to any health care services, supplies, or self-help information on COVID-19 monitoring, treatment, and mitigation is severely limited, and in many cases nonexistent.
- Intl. medical services for refugees are also now greatly hindered, curtailed, or simply suspended
- Once contracting the virus, there is a serious lack of adequate medical care or information available in Jordan in general to meet the demand of treating those afflicted and to limit the epidemic.

What this now leads to is **the clear probability and danger that this entire population is on the verge of an eruption of COVID-19 cases, death, and transmission to many more,** both within the refugee community, throughout Jordan, and even the surrounding region. As such, this poses one of the major threats in the world to slowing and containing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and massive loss of life.

**To meet this need** during a time of mandated restrictions on travel and direct physical contact, we are amassing **a network of live virtual stations** set up throughout Jordan in apartment buildings, large group homes, and camps where large numbers of refugees are already forced to live in compressed quarters, and **where critical "tele-med" services can immediately reach them.**

Our local team and disaster health care trainees in Jordan are made up of hundreds of local medical students and practitioners, in addition to our international team of expert health care professionals, who have already been providing a portion of our services as tele-health services for several years in addition to our on-site, face to face services. In the midst of this health crisis that prevents in-person services from reaching many in desperate need, we have both the skill resources and logistical experience to significantly and immediately ramp up and expand our tele-health capacity to help fill the gap in providing this vulnerable population with life-saving health services.

To accomplish this we need immediate financial support to allow us to purchase the computer and internet technology needed to establish as many virtual stations in as many of these population centers as possible while we still have time.

## **SOLUTION:**

### **What is Needed:**

In the midst of this pandemic among the most at-risk community in Jordan, **health and safety knowledge**, and particularly **specialized medical assessment, guidance, and instruction personally tailored to individual and family conditions and symptoms**, is currently the most powerful asset we have at our disposal. The challenge is getting this to those in most need in time so they can benefit from it and help slow the virus, at the same time that physical distancing is required.

### **Our Response:**

IHPA and our partner NGO, **Common Bond Institute**, are now working to immediately address both this life-threatening crisis of the COVID-19 virus, and ongoing psychosocial trauma recovery needs of the refugee population by **mobilizing an expanded tele-health service structure** staffed by our local medical team and our large pool of trainees who are medical professionals in Jordan. This is **a coordinated virtual treatment, health education, guidance, and support system in regions of Jordan with the highest concentration of refugees**

The virtual system will also be used on-going to:

- **Continue providing virtual skills training** sessions for our local trainees to ensure building an increasing local capacity of skilled disaster health care providers who continue, expand upon, and sustain these critical services.
- **Provide virtual educational classes** to refugee children who are already struggling to make up for years of lost education due to the war and turmoil, and who's schools in Jordan have now closed. Virtual classes and tutoring will be conducted by local and international volunteer Arabic language teachers.
- **Increase access** to continue providing psycho-emotional trauma healing and recovery services to the refugee community.

### **Our Resources, Capability, and Readiness to Rapidly Implement This Response:**

- **Our local team and our large pool of local trainees in Jordan** are made up of **hundreds of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year medical students and medical practitioners** who we train in psychosocial support skills to better help guide and emotionally support those in need as they also provide medical assistance. Together with our international team of IHPA expert therapists and medical professionals, they are a critically needed and directly available resource of skill and front-line knowledge 24/7. While these local medical providers are also required to stay at home when not working in hospitals, their expertise is desperately needed now more than ever by the massive number of Syrian refugees languishing in Jordan.
- **Our international clinical team** is made up of **16 expert mental health and medical practitioners** who are available to regularly provide tele-health assessment, treatment, guidance, and consultation services directly to refugees, and ongoing instruction, consultation, and supervision to our local team members and trainees. In addition, we are receiving offers from more health professionals wishing to join our team, and as a result expect the size of our international team to increase substantially.
- **Established tele-health expertise:** As part of our delivery capabilities, in addition to in-person services, over the last several years we have been regularly providing a portion of our services virtually, & so we have already worked out the various logistics for successfully implementing & conducting tele-health services, particularly in this region.

As such, with our large pool of Jordanian skilled medical service providers and our growing expert international team immediately available to conduct tele-health services from any location in Jordan or the world, coupled with our long established service network and NGO partnerships in Jordan, **our organization is uniquely positioned to act quickly and effectively in helping to fill this service gap**. Our organizations have conducted disaster health care services for nearly 3 decades, and we have the expertise, network, and systems to make this happen.

**What we need is funding** support for the required virtual technology to move forward fully and as soon as possible. \* All donations go directly to service operating costs.