

OPERATION MERCY

partnering to build hope, capacity and community

Report Var City Food and Hygiene Distribution Project

Located about 20 kilometers outside of Dohuk, Var City is currently home to around 6250 people and 1488 families. Of these families, 925 are Syrian refugee families and 563 are internally displaced Iraqi families from Mosul. Many of the Syrians fled Syria after the start of the civil war in March 2011. Others, like the internally displaced people from Mosul fled from ISIS's brutal invasion during the summer of 2014.



"Var City" means "future city" in Turkish and is not an official camp, but an apartment complex that is mainly rented by Syrian refugees and Iraqi IDPs. Because it is not a formal camp setting, it has received little attention and assistance from the UN and the international community. Due to lack of funding, the World Food Program had to stop providing food rations in September 2015. This pressure to meet their basic needs is one of the factors which caused an estimated 200 Syrian Refugee families to attempt migration from Var City to Europe in search of hope. Our partner organization, HOME, is one of the few organizations continuously providing health services and English classes. Var City was chosen in part because our partner organization shares our long-term vision to see sustainable relief and development with a transformational impact through empowering, training, and mentoring relationships in the community.

An informal community assessment revealed that the lack of resources limits the ability of the families to purchase food and hygiene products. Community leaders confirmed these needs as

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the greatest priority. The main project components were the distribution of food packs and hygiene kits. The exact components of the kits were determined through a focus group that is a representation of the community in consultation with community leaders.



Operation Mercy (OPM) conducted a total of 6 distributions, divided over 3 months; four food pack and two hygiene kit distributions. The specific items changed from distribution to distribution due to requests from the local community and due to working with different wholesalers. But in general, the items in the pictures above were distributed. The number of food packs and hygiene kits distributed increased over time as more families moved to Var City and were registered.

The local community was very pleased about the way the distribution was set up. One Syrian woman planned not to come to the distribution. She had been to other distributions and didn't want to deal with the trouble, problems and fighting. Her neighbor came home from the distribution and told her that this distribution was different: "There's no fighting. There's order and organization." She then went and was pleased with her experience.



Besides the staff of OPM and HOME and expat volunteers, more than 40 different people from the local community were hired for this project. They helped with unloading the trucks, packaging the food and hygiene items and registering the beneficiaries.

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Most of the residents of Var City complain about the costs of living expenses, such as rent, generator power and food. Many try to find work as day laborers, but all the living expenses are a huge burden.

Bozan Habash is from Qamishli, Syria, where he worked as a carpenter. He has two sons. His oldest son was in the Syrian army but they had to flee because of the war in 2012. When they arrived in Dohuk Governorate, they tried to get into a camp, but there was no space. Initially he kept trying to get into a

camp, but without result, so he gave up. One of his sons managed to get into one of the camps nearby and the other son lives with Bozan in Var City. He enjoys living in Var City, especially because many of his neighbours fled from the same village of Qamishli. The downside of living in Var City is the relatively high rent and other expenses. He uses his savings that he took with him from Syria to pay the expenses.

Idris Mohammed Ameen also comes from Qamishli. He is married and has a one year old son. He had to leave everything when he left Syria in 2012, his house, his land and his work. His four brothers are living with him. His parents are still in Syria to guard their land. For more than three years he could not find work, but two months ago he found a job. He is currently working as a driver and has to provide for his family and brothers, as his brothers can't find work. Idris says: "Having no work is a huge burden. Life is hard with all the costs. Var City is a nice place to live, but we have to pay rent". For the future he hopes to leave Iraq and live in Canada. The distribution of food and hygiene items help to supplement the food and hygiene allowance they use to sustain their family.

Fatima, a Syrian woman and a mother of six children mentioned that in the time when they lived in Syria they weren't rich but they always had enough. Nowadays it's a struggle to find income and provide for rent and other costs. She's using every single item that is distributed and needs it desperately.

During our in-home evaluations many beneficiaries said that the OPM Food and Hygiene Project greatly serviced the families of Var City, and they are grateful to OPM for showing them they are not forgotten or alone.



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