



# SAMS

2019 Annual Report





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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear SAMS members and supporters,

Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, SAMS has responded to the needs of millions of vulnerable populations who have been subjected to years of violence, displacement, and unlawful crimes against humanity. Despite these unprecedented challenges, SAMS has continued to deliver dignified, specialized care to those in desperate need in the face of one of the greatest humanitarian crises of this century.

Thanks to the unwavering support of our members, donors, and volunteers from around the world, SAMS has provided nearly 20 million medical services to those caught in conflict struggling to access life-saving care.

In a conflict that has witnessed unprecedented brutality and total disregard for human life and international humanitarian laws - including deliberate and systematic attacks on medical facilities - our work has never been

greater than it is today. The latest escalation in northwest Syria has caused widespread loss of life, destruction of civilian infrastructure, and the displacement of thousands of Syrians. These newly displaced civilians live in dire conditions within ever-shrinking space that struggle to accommodate the most basic of necessities.

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the already-fragile humanitarian response in northwest Syria. With virtually no medical infrastructure, an outbreak in the area could be catastrophic for nearly 4 million civilians, more than 1.5 million of whom live in IDP settlements.

Throughout the years, we have had our hospitals demolished in aerial attacks and our medical personnel and staff besieged and forcibly displaced.

However, the bravery and commitment of medical workers on the ground has remained constant. They have continued to risk their lives to save others. They are a source of inspiration in a grim reality. They are the true heroes.

Looking forward, we have come to realize that there are immense challenges that lie ahead as we pledge to help rebuild Syria's decimated health infrastructure and ensure no one is left untreated. We will expand our medical relief programs and operations on the ground to meet growing medical needs while investing in medical education and research. We will continue to be the voice of the voiceless and advocate for the protection of medical personnel and their patients.

SAMS is proud to represent over 1,500 members across the United States who have been an integral part of our community that strives to succeed where the international community

has fallen short of meeting Syria's humanitarian needs.

I would like to extend my warmest thanks to our members, donors, and volunteers for their unconditional trust and support throughout the years. We are forever grateful.

All the best,

Muffadal Hamadeh, MD  
Syrian American Medical Society, President



## MESSAGE FROM FOUNDATION CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear SAMS supporters,

It is with great satisfaction that we share the highlights of SAMS' 2019 efforts as represented in this 2019 Annual Report. We take pride in the heroic resilience of our frontline medical staff in Syria and beyond who continue to risk their lives in order to save others. We are in awe of their dedication and courage which has enabled us to have a lasting impact and serve millions of vulnerable individuals. They are our true heroes.

We also take pride in continually adapting to a relentless conflict over the past year. We were forced to evacuate some of our facilities and seek safer locations in densely populated areas. In spite of unimaginable challenges, we were able to provide over 2.4 million medical services in Syria alone, at a cost of \$12.27 per patient. This adaptation is also reflected in how we have found new ways to support chronic care for the most vulnerable. With the support of our 1,500+ members and the many

volunteers in the United States and abroad, SAMS continues to offer specialized, vital care, including dialysis and cancer treatment for patients grasping for life.

This report tells the story of hope through the lens of training courses that SAMS continued to offer to midwives, nurses, and doctors in 2019. Support for our medical personnel has always been our top priority as we recognize their sacrifices and courage. Through our mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) programs in Syria and neighboring countries, SAMS has developed projects to serve war-traumatized patients, as well as providing services to gender-based violence (GBV) survivors. In 2019, SAMS moved toward the provision of integrated MHPSS and GBV support at all of our medical facilities in northwest Syria. Through our well-designed and frequent medical missions to the region, SAMS medical volunteers have provided high-

quality, dignified specialty services to over 15,000 Syrian refugees and underserved host communities.

Finally, in the pages ahead, you will see many references to the commitment that demonstrates SAMS' pledge to neutral and independent humanitarian relief provided to those in greatest need. It is also demonstrated by SAMS' Members who volunteered their time and skills to train, mentor, educate, and offer a hand to lift their peers in Syria who have had so much stripped away.

Over the years, SAMS has been one of the leading voices for the protection of civilians and medical personnel in Syria who have faced bombardment, siege, and starvation. In 2019, we continued to advocate for the protection of civilians at the UN, on the Hill, at Embassies, at conferences, and in the hallways, after hours, and on social media—anywhere that we could

plead our case and protect highly vulnerable populations.

Again, it is with immense pride, hope, and commitment that we share our impact in 2019 that wouldn't be possible without your unwavering support. Thank you for entrusting us with this task of ensuring no one is left behind in the face of crisis.

Sincerely,

*David Lillie*

David Lillie  
Executive Director

*Maher Azzouz*

Maher Azzouz, MD  
SAMS Foundation Chair



## ABOUT SAMS

The Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) was founded in 1998 in the United States as a professional society to provide networking, educational, cultural, and professional services to medical professionals of Syrian descent. SAMS Foundation, the charitable arm of SAMS, was launched in 2007. Since then, SAMS has become one of the most active and leading medical relief organizations that is working on the front lines of crisis relief in Syria, neighboring countries, and beyond.

**Since 2011, SAMS has provided nearly 20 million medical services to those impacted by conflict, delivering over \$207 million in humanitarian aid.**

SAMS has since implemented an integrated model of essential services that emphasizes priority needs, including the delivery of medical education, training, and financial support for physicians and other healthcare workers inside Syria and in neighboring countries. SAMS has established field hospitals, intensive care units, dental and primary care clinics, birth and newborn care facilities, mobile medical units, and dialysis centers.

Additionally, SAMS has provided mental health and psychosocial support as well as organized specialized medical missions to Syria's neighboring countries and beyond. SAMS provides all its programs with the necessary medications, medical devices, supplies, and instruments through procurement and distribution of gifts in kind (GIK). In 2017, SAMS launched its SAMS Community Outreach (SCO) to bring free, quality health care to vulnerable communities in the US.

### OUR MISSION...

is dedicated to delivering life-saving services, revitalizing health systems during crisis, and promoting medical education via a network of humanitarians in Syria, the US, and beyond.

### OUR VISION...

is to strengthen the future of Syria's healthcare, delivering dignified medical relief where needed, fortified by a dedicated medical community.

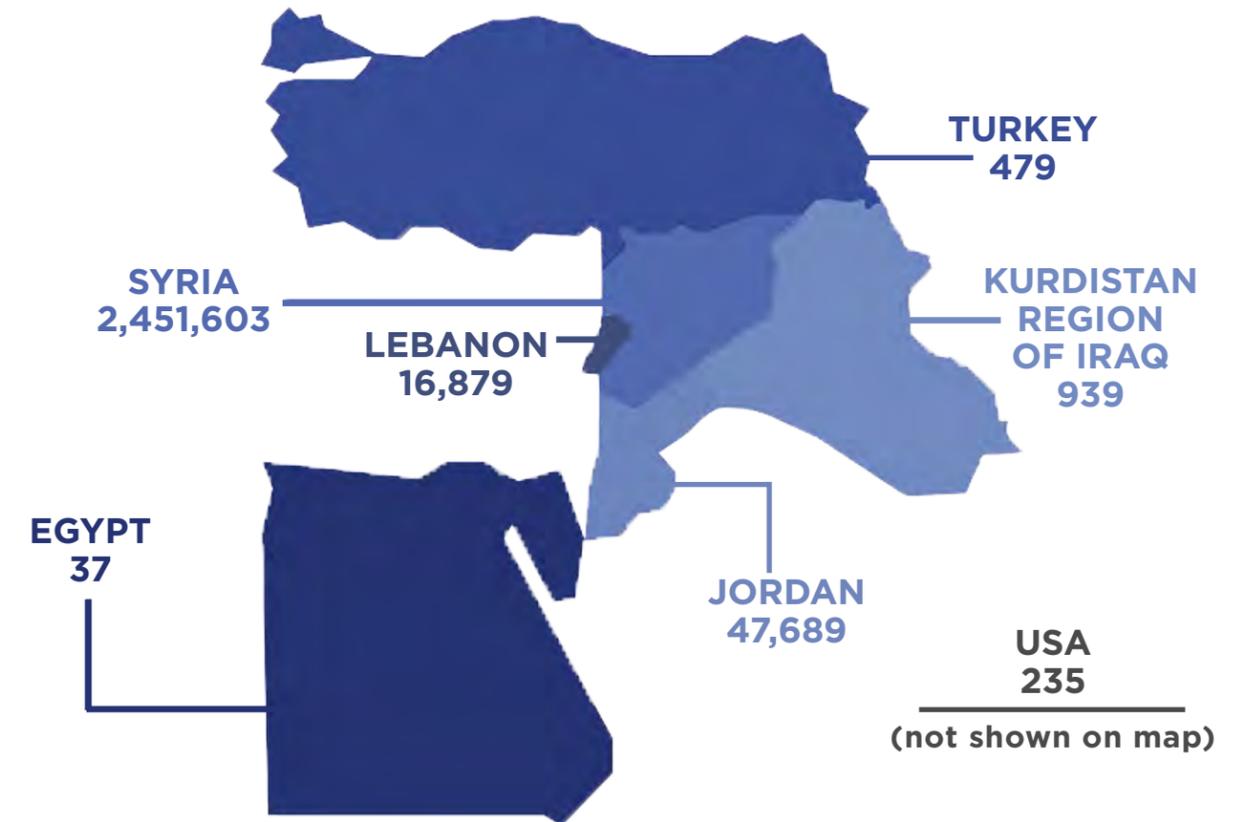




## SAMS 2019 IMPACT AT A GLANCE

SAMS continued to provide primary and specialized care in seven countries, with major operations in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan.

In 2019, SAMS provided **over 2.5 million services** to vulnerable populations with **an average cost of \$12.27 per service**.



**2.5+ mil**

medical services



**2,209**

medical staff supported



**199,468**

surgeries performed



**102,444**

vaccinations



**169,799**

labs, imaging & blood bank



**27,127**

deliveries



**55**

facilities supported



**20,537**

psychosocial services



**9,933**

dialysis services



**16,388**

physical therapy



## SYRIA

In 2019, SAMS expanded its relief operations in Syria to meet growing medical needs due to escalation in the northwest region that began on April 26, 2019. Since then, civilians have been subjected to a relentless bombardment campaign, resulting in the largest displacement in the 9-year conflict.

Since 2011, SAMS has supported healthcare provision throughout Syria. In light of the geopolitical shifts in 2019, SAMS was forced to operate mainly in northwest Syria, home to nearly 4 million civilians. More than half of these civilians have been forced to flee their homes several times and now reside in overstretched camps and informal settlements that struggle to fulfill overwhelming humanitarian needs.

In Syria, SAMS provides primary and specialized care, including dialysis, mental health and psychosocial support, reproductive health, physical therapy, and more. In 2019, SAMS operated 50 facilities in 3 governorates - Idlib, Hama, and Aleppo - providing over 2.4 million services to those in dire need.

Additionally, SAMS operates mobile clinics that travel to hard-to-reach areas where a large number of internally displaced people (IDPs) reside in order to provide a range of medical services, including internal medicine, pediatrics, OBGYN, and psychosocial support. These clinics employ a general physician, a midwife, a nurse, a pharmacist, and a psychosocial support team. In 2019, SAMS operated four mobile clinics, treating an average of 200 patients a day.



## HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN NORTHWEST SYRIA

Attacks on health facilities and health workers in northwest Syria continue with impunity, decimating Syria's healthcare system. **Since late April 2019, SAMS has documented at least 79 attacks on healthcare facilities.** Despite these unfathomable challenges, our medical personnel continued to brave bombardment to care for the sick and injured.

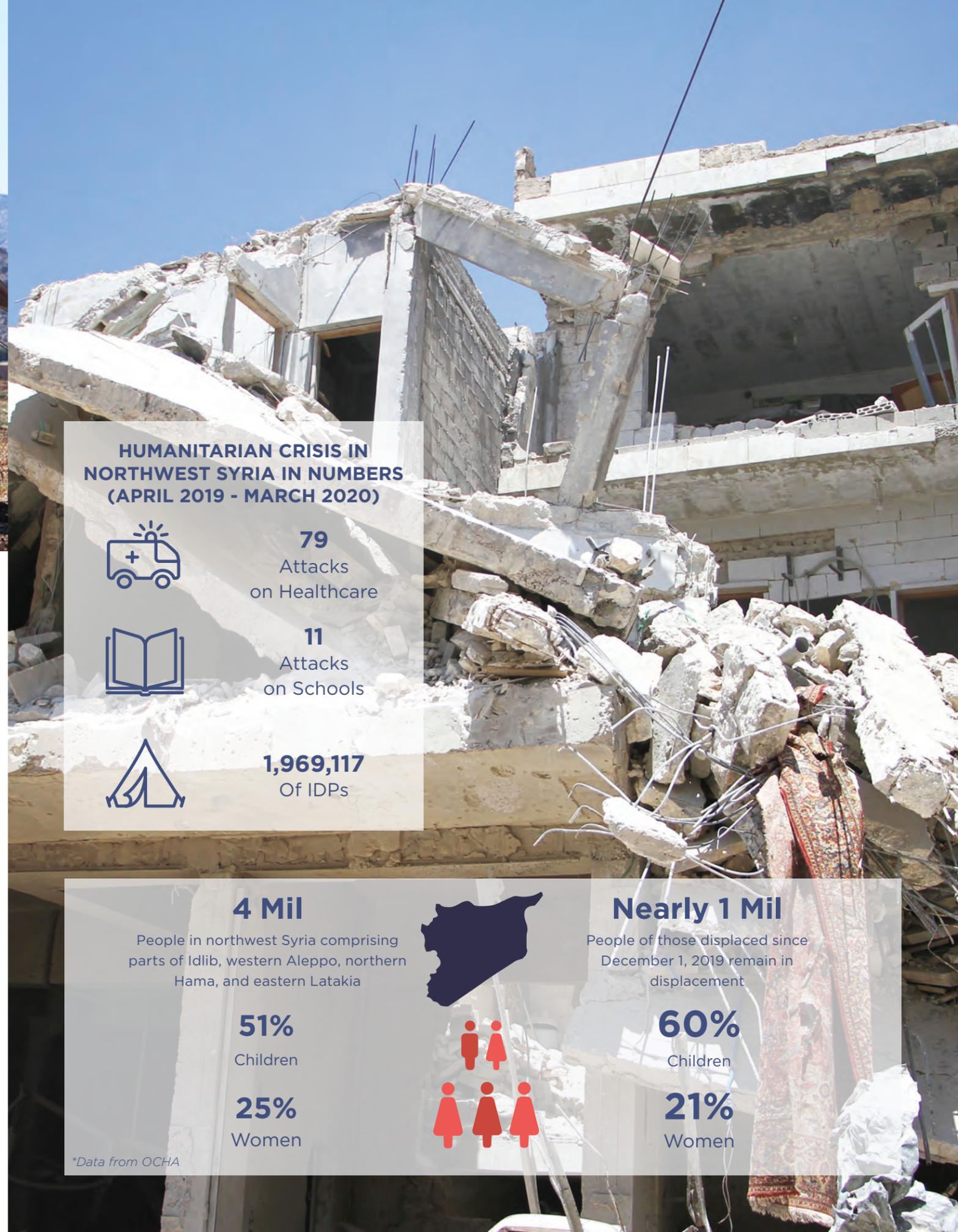
The living conditions for IDPs in northwest Syria are dire, with millions living out in the open, living between olive trees with little or no access to proper shelter, WASH, clean water, fuel, or healthcare. Harsh winter conditions only increased the suffering of hundreds of thousands of vulnerable individuals, many of whom had been displaced multiple times.

Between December 2019 and March 2020, at least one million individuals were displaced, representing the largest IDP movement of our time. Despite a robust humanitarian response, the needs of IDPs remained largely unmet.

“ I ran out of words. Our hospital is overflowing, we have no beds, no rooms, and no personnel left to receive this huge number of patients. I felt powerless.

- Dr. Ikram Haboosh,  
Director of SAMS' Idlib Maternity Hospital

Facilities are severely understaffed, and health workers are required to work long hours, often performing tasks outside their specialization. Patients fear being targeted either in a health facility or on their way to seek care. Essential equipment and supplies are scarce due to continued attacks on healthcare, which overburden the entire health system in the area. Other facilities are forced to fill the gap left after systematic targeting of other healthcare facilities. **Hospitals and medical facilities have been characterized as one of the most dangerous places in Syria.**



### HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN NORTHWEST SYRIA IN NUMBERS (APRIL 2019 - MARCH 2020)



**79**  
Attacks  
on Healthcare



**11**  
Attacks  
on Schools



**1,969,117**  
Of IDPs

**4 Mil**

People in northwest Syria comprising parts of Idlib, western Aleppo, northern Hama, and eastern Latakia



**51%**  
Children

**25%**  
Women



**Nearly 1 Mil**

People of those displaced since December 1, 2019 remain in displacement

**60%**  
Children

**21%**  
Women

\*Data from OCHA



“ Both of my children were showing signs of illness. We were the first to show up at the mobile clinic every week it comes to our camp. We're grateful for your services and continued support.

- An IDP Mother in Northwest Syria



## SAMS EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN NORTHWEST SYRIA

**In response to the emergency situation and unprecedented waves of displacement in northwest Syria in 2019, SAMS implemented the following projects:**

- Deployed mobile clinic units to hard-to-reach areas and IDP settlements that lacked access to care. Each mobile clinic operated a well-equipped pharmacy and consisted of a physician, a midwife, and a social worker. Each mobile clinic saw an average of 200 patients on a daily basis;
- Established an emergency response mechanism to monitor events on the ground in northwest Syria 24/7;
- Procured additional medications and medical supplies for SAMS facilities across the area to meet the increased demand as newly displaced individuals arrived;
- Reinforced and resupplied its medical facilities, as conditions permitted; and
- Partnered with local organizations to distribute humanitarian aid, such as fuel, ready-to-eat food items, blankets, heaters, and diapers for babies and adults.

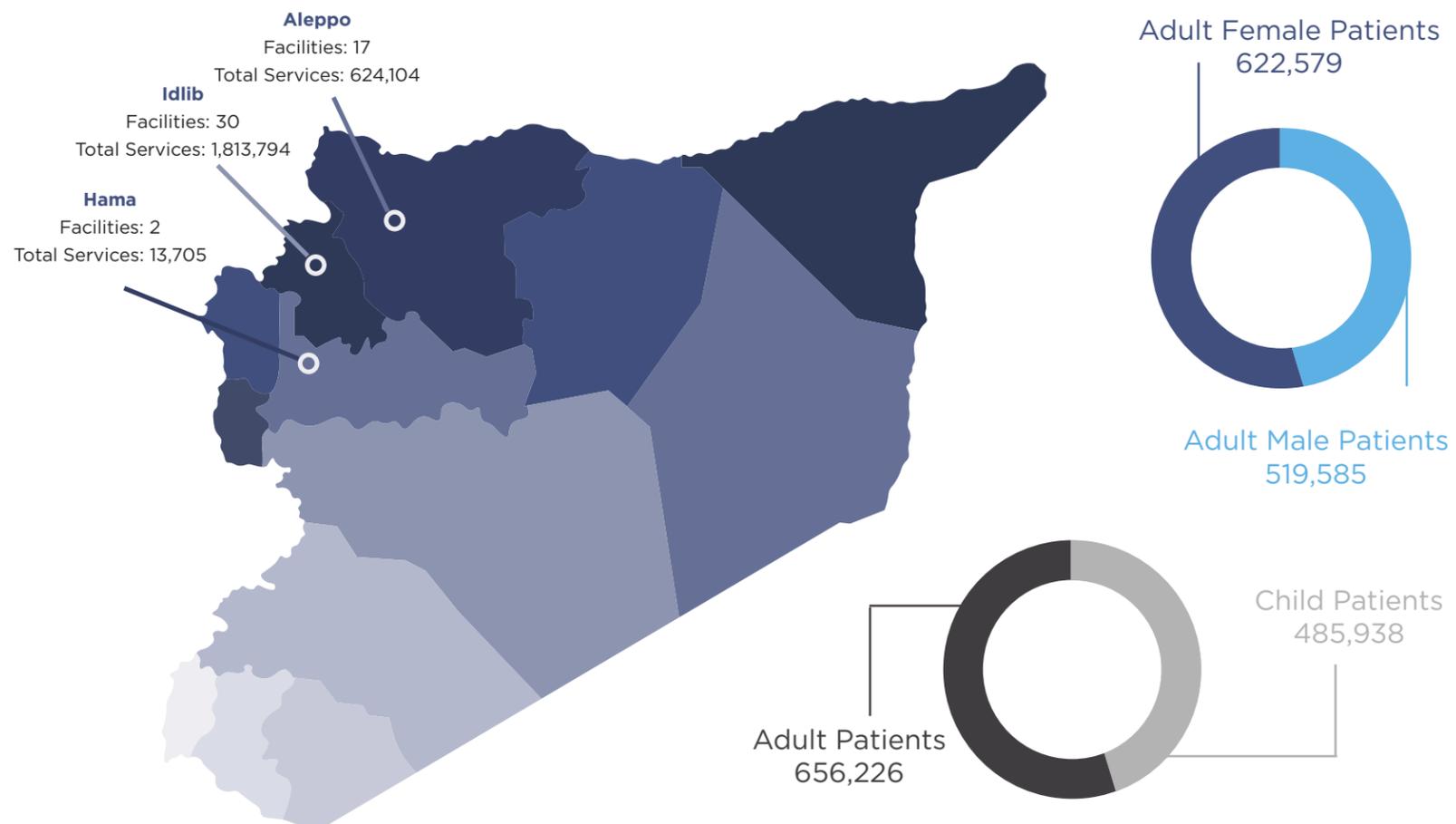


## SYRIA PROGRAMS

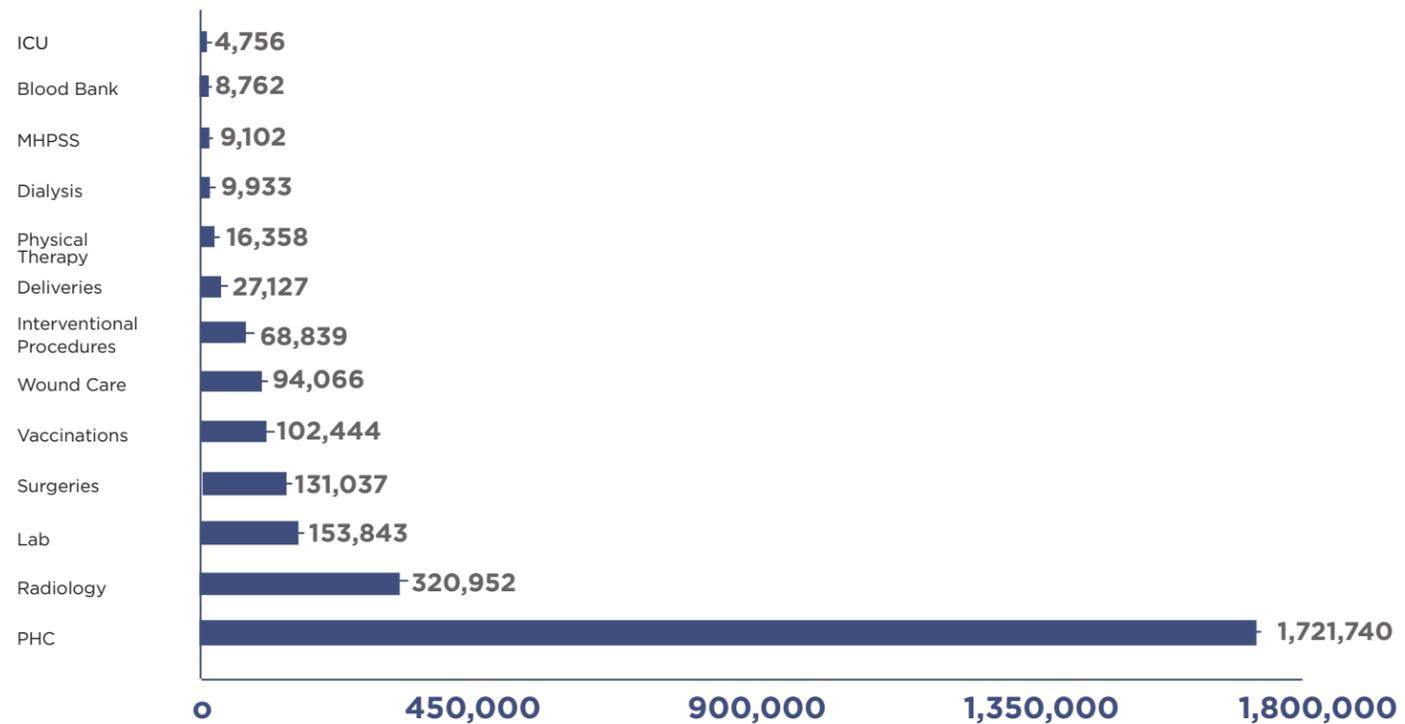
SAMS is one of the leading and most active medical relief organizations in northwest Syria, home to nearly 4 million people. SAMS provides a range of specialized services to vulnerable populations who struggle to access vital care. In 2019, SAMS supported 49 medical facilities, including 10 vaccination centers as part of the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) and four women and girls safe spaces (WGSS), and successfully integrated Gender-Based Violence (GBV) services in five SAMS-supported facilities in collaboration with local partners.

“ This is the first time that we’ve ever received any kind of humanitarian assistance since we arrived at this camp a few months ago.

-Um Laith,  
IDP Beneficiary in Northwest Syria



**In 2019, SAMS provided over 2.4 million medical services, treated over 1.1 million beneficiaries, operated 49 medical facilities, and supported over 2,000 medical workers in northwest Syria.**



**SERVICES PROVIDED IN SYRIA IN 2019**

## IDLIB ONCOLOGY CENTER

There are currently over 3 million Syrians trapped in Idlib who face a grim and uncertain future. Many cannot access care for treatable diseases, including cancer. After years of ongoing conflict and attacks on healthcare, Syria's medical infrastructure has deteriorated, and is ill-equipped to treat cancer patients. As a result, SAMS launched an oncology center in November 2018 to ensure that women with curable breast cancer received life-saving

treatment. It is the only center of its kind providing these life-saving services in northwest Syria. In 2019, we expanded the services provided in this center to include treatment for two types of tumors, both colon and Hodgkin and non-Hodgkin lymphoma in addition to breast cancer treatment, which has been provided since its inception. **In 2019, the center provided life-saving care to more than 3,089 patients.**





## IYCF CAMPAIGN IN NORTHWEST SYRIA

In November 2019, SAMS launched the seventh round of the Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) campaign in northwest Syria, in partnership with UNICEF, Independent Doctors Association, and other local partners. The campaign sought to improve the nutritional health of children under the age of five in order to reduce the infant and under-five mortality rate, especially for those affected by conflict.

Cases of severe malnutrition among children were immediately transferred to SAMS facilities for advanced treatment. The campaign also worked to raise public awareness on the benefits and importance of breastfeeding.

“ My daughter was diagnosed with malnutrition. I had no idea until the team examined her. I’m very grateful for their visit. The team gave my daughter some vitamins and took her to see a specialist.

- Ms. Dima,  
An IDP Mother in Northwest Syria



## STORY FROM THE FIELD

In 2018, 6-year-old Amel al-Mustafa lost her mother and brother in an attack on their neighborhood in the town of Kafr Zita. Since then, Amel has been moving from one camp to another. During the recent escalation in Idlib, airstrikes hit the town of Haas, where Amel and her father sought refuge in one of the camps.

Amel was rushed to our hospital after sustaining multiple injuries. Our surgical team at Aqrabet Hospital operated on Amel to fix her fractured thigh bone and extensive bone loss. The surgery was successful and Amel was discharged a few days later once she recovered.

Her infant half-sister Tasnim was also injured in this attack. Our own Dr. Abdel Salam, who treated the infant stated: “Tasnim was in the hospital for a few weeks now. She suffered an eye and a hand injury. She underwent a couple of surgeries, and her recovery went well.”

Despite the awful and saddening conditions for these young children, SAMS is proud to be able to provide care to those impacted by the crisis and help rebuild and restore families.

# Medical Technical Institute

## Midwifery Institute in Murrat Al Nu'nan



“ I gained a lot of valuable practical experience by working in hospitals, where we put everything we had learned to actual use. I also gained a wealth of exposure to advanced theoretical studies at the institute.

- Hiba Mousa,  
Graduate from SAMS Midwifery Institute



## MEDICAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

SAMS continues to provide educational opportunities to medical professionals and students in Syria. In addition to professional development training and workshops, SAMS supports two midwifery schools and a nursing institute in northwest Syria. **In 2019, 38 students graduated from our 18-month nurse-to-midwife program in the Idlib governorate.**

Currently, there are 27 students who are enrolled in the second and third phases of the 18-month nurse-to-midwife program and are expected to graduate in 2020. Simultaneously, the first class of midwifery students in SAMS' three-year program are expected to graduate in early 2021.

Furthermore, SAMS' two-year nursing program at the Termanin Nursing Institute had 83 students enrolled throughout 2019, including 28 new students. **In total, 19 students graduated from the nursing school in 2019.**

SAMS has developed a new program for graduates in training whose education was interrupted by the conflict and needed to complete their specialization.

Through our collaboration with the Syrian Board of Medical Specialties (SBOMS), SAMS launched the Resident Doctors Program in 2019, providing financial support to residents to begin their residency program or continue their studies within different specialties.

In 2019, SAMS expanded its support from 13 residents enrolled in 2018 to 23 residents and expanded the training specialties from internal medicine only to include gynecology, ophthalmology, ENT, general surgery, pediatrics, orthopedic surgery, cardiovascular diseases, and nephrology.

SAMS also contributes to the scientific committee that supervises the Resident Doctors Program. This committee provides technical and scientific consultations by SAMS advisory and technical committees in Turkey and members in the United States. In 2019, SAMS Internal Medicine (IM) Technical Committee provided online training and curriculum guidelines to the mentoring doctors who were supervising the IM residents.





## JORDAN

In Jordan, SAMS operates a number of medical relief programs for Syrian refugees and underserved local communities who struggle to access the care they need. In 2019, SAMS continued to operate a medical center in Al-Zaatari Refugee Camp, home to nearly 80,000 Syrian refugees, organize medical missions throughout the year, and spearhead mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) programming.

As part of our MHPSS programming in Jordan, our team conducts ongoing training for mental healthcare providers and social workers in order to further address the needs of vulnerable communities.

**In 2019, SAMS provided 47,689 medical services in Jordan to Syrian refugees and underserved host communities.**

## AL-ZAATARI MEDICAL CENTER

SAMS Medical Center in Al-Zaatari Camp operates a number of clinics, including primary healthcare, dental, emergency, radiology and lab tests, as well as a well-equipped pharmacy. Additionally, the center provides oral rehydration salts (ORS) services, vaccinations, and family planning, all free of charge.

**In 2019, SAMS provided 29,069 services at our medical center in Al-Zaatari Refugee Camp, home to nearly 80,000 Syrian refugees.**

The center was launched in November 2017 to fill service gaps in specialized healthcare in the camp by

offering on-site lab testing, radiology, and a pharmacy tailored to the needs of the camp's residents.

“ I was able to receive all the services I needed for my diagnosis. The team here conducted the necessary tests and provided diagnostic radiology exams. After my diagnosis, the doctor prescribed medications from their pharmacy.

- Um Ahmed,  
Refugee Residing in Al-Zaatari Camp





In collaboration with the University of Jordan, SAMS conducted a two-day symposium in Jordan, entitled “Regional to Global Transition of Refugee Mental Health Towards Resilience,” in July 2019. Throughout the symposium, a number of recommendations and guidelines on MHPSS for Syrian refugees and underserved local communities in Jordan were discussed:

- The development and adoption of a community-based model that stimulates psychosocial resilience in both the refugees and host communities;
- The formation of a joint committee to ensure a standardization of procedures and practices;

- Complementary implementation of services between the organizations providing mental health & psychosocial services;
- Integration of mental health & psychosocial support with primary health care; and
- Planning of scientific research to generate evidence-based practices and programs.

Representatives from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, the Jordan Psychological Association, Doctors Without Borders, Al-Yarmouk University, Noor Al-Hussein Foundation, and the International Medical Corp participated in the symposium.





## SPECIALIZED MEDICAL MISSIONS

SAMS medical missions to Jordan provided specialized services to those who otherwise would be unable to afford the prohibitively high cost of health services. At SAMS, we are proud to fill these gaps for Syrian refugees and underserved locals, providing cardiac catheterizations, ophthalmic interventions among other services.

In 2019, SAMS conducted four medical missions to Jordan to provide surgical and specialized care to Syrian refugees and underserved local communities. **These missions brought together 403 volunteers from around the world, treating 8,870 beneficiaries.**

SAMS also launched a Hearing Aid Medical Mission in April 2019, providing 114 young refugees with hearing aids and speech therapy services. Following the mission, our specialized team of speech pathologists in Jordan worked with these children to improve their overall communication.

Furthermore, SAMS organized and provided a two-day radiology training for the Jordanian Ministry of Health. In total, 25 radiology residents and specialists participated in the training.

In July 2019, SAMS also organized our first Mental Health and Psychosocial Support training mission to Jordan where volunteer mental health workers conducted specialized training for local providers. Topics included “Suicide Risk Assessment,” “Evidence-based Trauma Treatment for Children,” “Provider Self-Care,” and more. In total, six volunteers conducted 11 training sessions for 204 local mental health providers.

In the second half of 2019, SAMS volunteer physicians had the opportunity to travel to Jordan and work alongside our medical team at the SAMS Medical Center in Zaatari Refugee Camp for a period of three to four weeks at a time.



## STORY FROM THE FIELD

“I want to have a happy life.”

Muamen, 16, was one of the 114 children who received hearing aids and speech therapy services during our medical mission to Jordan in April 2019.

Since then, Muamen’s hearing and speech have improved tremendously thanks to our ongoing speech therapy sessions provided through our programming in Jordan. When he initially put on his hearing aids, he kept repeating his mother and father’s names

several times as it was the first time he was able to hear his own voice. “He was extremely excited,” said his mother.

Because the average household income for Syrian refugees in Jordan is \$11 a day, many individuals like Muamen can’t afford specialized, life-changing services such as hearing aids and speech therapy. SAMS is proud to provide care to those who struggle to access these services due to prohibitively high costs.



## SPECIALIZED CARE PROJECTS

In 2019, SAMS Innovative Transplant Program in Jordan continued, supporting 42 patients with post-transplant medications, laboratory assessment of their kidney function, and quarterly evaluation of their general status during medical missions.

Additionally, SAMS provided treatment for retinal detachment and hemorrhage to over 60 patients, primarily due to complications from diabetes. Through four injection and laser sessions throughout the year, the progress of the disease was delayed or halted all together, and the patients' vision was preserved.

SAMS team in Jordan conducted matching tests for one of our Thalassemia patients, a 13-year-old Syrian refugee living in Al-Zaatari Refugee Camp with her family. After recommendations from SAMS'

Hematology Committee, the patient received the treatment she needed, including regular laboratory tests, blood transfusions, and medications to have a normal childhood like other children her age.

## MEDICAL EDUCATION RESIDENCY PROJECT

SAMS continues to support displaced Syrian medical graduates completing their residency training in Jordan. In 2019, SAMS supported five residents enrolled at the Islamic Hospital and one resident enrolled at the Jordan Hospital in the specializations of emergency medicine, internal medicine, anesthesiology, ophthalmology, and pediatrics.



“ Receiving a scholarship from SAMS was one of the best things that ever happened to me. It happened at the right time. As a recent graduate, there weren't any available scholarship opportunities, in addition to challenges facing Syrians to pursue their residency program here in Jordan.

**-Dr. Anas Zeitoun,  
Recipient of SAMS Residency Scholarship**



## TURKEY

SAMS continues to be one of the leading humanitarian organizations working in Turkey, spearheading emergency response and operations inside Syria. Additionally, SAMS is one of the co-leaders of the Health Cluster in Gaziantep, Turkey.

### CROSS BORDER OPERATIONS

SAMS logistics and procurement staff based in Gaziantep and Reyhanli oversee our cross-border operations in northwest Syria to ensure that our medical facilities are well-equipped to serve populations in need, many of whom have limited or no access to healthcare. In order to be prepared to respond swiftly during emergencies, SAMS also operates a warehouse in Termanin, which houses medical supplies and equipment.

**In 2019, SAMS delivered 238 containers to its healthcare facilities inside Syria, totaling over \$12 million in medical and humanitarian aid.**

## MEDICAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

As part of our steadfast commitment to support medical workers inside Syria, SAMS continues to lead hands-on workshops to ensure that our personnel have access to the most up-to-date innovations and patient management practices in the field of medicine. Additionally, SAMS expanded its GBV training and services in Turkey through different grants from the Bureau of Democracy. SAMS continues to support Syrian medical students in Turkey and Bosnia through its scholarship program. This program, sponsors medical, dental, and pharmacy students accredited universities. This scholarship started in 2016 with 19 students. The second group of 24 students was accepted in 2018, for a total number of 43 beneficiaries.

The majority of these students worked in medical relief projects inside Syria, who were subjected to siege and displacement. So far, six students

graduated with a medical degree and are currently working in Turkey as general practitioners in Migrant Health Clinic serving Syrian refugees. Six more students are expected to graduate in 2020. **In 2019, SAMS conducted 233 workshops and trained 1,331 medical workers in Syria, including 17 training sessions in Gaziantep for 207 trainees.**

### MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT CENTER

In May 2019, SAMS launched a Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) center in Gaziantep, Turkey, providing individual and group counseling sessions, group activities, and workshops for vulnerable individuals.



The center provides services free of charge throughout the week, thanks to the generous support of the U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM). SAMS established the center in compliance with the Gaziantep Health Directorate's standards, and partnered with local and international organizations working in Turkey to build a robust referral network.

Since its inception, the number of beneficiaries reaching the center has increased, including the total number of cases referred by other service providers and the total number of services provided at the center. Beneficiaries of the center showed noticeable improvement and satisfaction as measured by participant surveys. The responses to the surveys also indicated a decrease in the communities stigma towards mental health that was mirrored in their increased participation in the MHPSS group and awareness sessions.

As part of our effort to build the capacity of our MHPSS staff, bi-weekly tele-sessions were arranged for technical staff. The sessions were led by a US-based SAMS member and a board-certified psychiatrist who had volunteered their time to provide remote technical supervision through focus group discussions. These sessions also focused on more complex cases being received at the center.

**In 2019, SAMS' MHPSS Center in Gaziantep provided services to 479 beneficiaries, many of whom were children.**

In northwest Syria, SAMS Turkey office established psychosocial support services in 23 medical facilities and served thousands of patients, many of whom were children and women.





## LEBANON

SAMS remains active in Lebanon, as the country faces one of the worst humanitarian crises of our time on the heels of a collapsing economy. Lebanon has the largest number of Syrian and Palestinian refugees per capita. According to UNHCR, there are currently 918,974 Syrian refugees residing in Lebanon - more than 80% are women and children - who struggle to access the care they need while they remain exposed to grave protection concerns.

**In 2019, SAMS provided 16,879 medical services to Syrian refugees and underserved local populations in Lebanon.**

In order to continue to support Syrian refugees and underserved host communities, SAMS operates medical relief programming, including psychosocial support and specialized medical missions.

“ *Most of our surgeries today, if we did not do it, it would not have been done. This is life-saving work that SAMS is doing.* ”

**- Dr. Mouawiya Martini,  
SAM Volunteer**

## INCREASING ACCESS TO HOSPITAL CARE

According to the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, the number of displaced Syrian and Palestinian households unable to access hospitalization and specialized care has increased due to the prohibitively high cost of treatment. As a result, there are largely unmet needs, particularly for children and the elderly.

In response, SAMS launched a new initiative in 2019 in partnership with OCHA's Lebanon Humanitarian Fund to provide financial subsidies to displaced Syrian and Palestinian refugees in order to access quality, life-saving healthcare. Through this 18-month initiative which began in August 2019, SAMS seeks to increase secondary healthcare access by reducing the financial burden that many refugees face in Lebanon.

SAMS works closely with the UNHCR and UNRWA to identify patients in need of emergency, advanced surgical procedures such as open-heart and angioplasty surgeries, as well as other costly, vital procedures and to provide the inpatient hospital care coverage and treatment.

Once the patient is discharged from the hospital, SAMS serves as the referral focal point for those with post-operative complications. Patient referrals are part of SAMS' ongoing efforts to strengthen referral pathways for follow up care within the health sector and improve access to secondary and tertiary care for those with critical medical needs. **Through this project, SAMS is providing financial subsidies for 250 Palestinian refugees and 350 Syrian refugee children across the country who otherwise would not have access to life-saving care.**



## MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services are the most underfunded medical services, especially for displaced populations. In Lebanon, SAMS has developed MHPSS programming to address the psychological effects of years of conflict and trauma on the well-being of refugees. SAMS is also proud to support underserved local communities who do not have access to these services.

**In 2019, SAMS provided MHPSS services to 13,245 beneficiaries.**

“ I had the honor to join this medical mission with SAMS and meet these wonderful children and help them with their speech. As we continue to expand our MHPSS work in Lebanon, providing speech therapy services is vital.

- Ibtisam Rahima,  
Pathologist & SAMS Volunteer

## HEARTLAND ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

In partnership with Heartland Alliance International, thanks to support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, SAMS implemented a project in Lebanon, to provide sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender-based violence (GBV) services for Syrian refugee women and girls. The project provided MHPSS support for GBV cases, in addition to family planning, reproductive health services, and awareness-raising sessions.

Through this project, SAMS provided services for 11,539 beneficiaries.

## CUP OF TEACH PROGRAM

The “Cup of Teach” project uses a holistic community-based approach to provide psychosocial support, non-formal education, disease management and medication distribution, dental hygiene, and referrals. This project has been implemented in two displaced communities in need in the Beka’a Valley. Additionally, we have established a community center to provide a safe space for displaced children to learn new skills and participate in educational activities to promote their well-being.

In 2019, SAMS provided 2,024 services through this program, benefitting 263 children and 192 women.



## HELPING HANDS PROGRAM

“Helping Hands” is another SAMS’ psychosocial support program in Lebanon geared toward children between the ages of 6 and 14. The project’s main objective is to introduce emotional management, relationship components and structure to children who have been impacted by violence, trauma, and displacement. Through this program, children learn to interact with each other in a safe space and acquire critical skills, including problem-solving. **In 2019, SAMS provided MHPSS services to 558 children in 17 schools and 23 informal settlements through this project.**

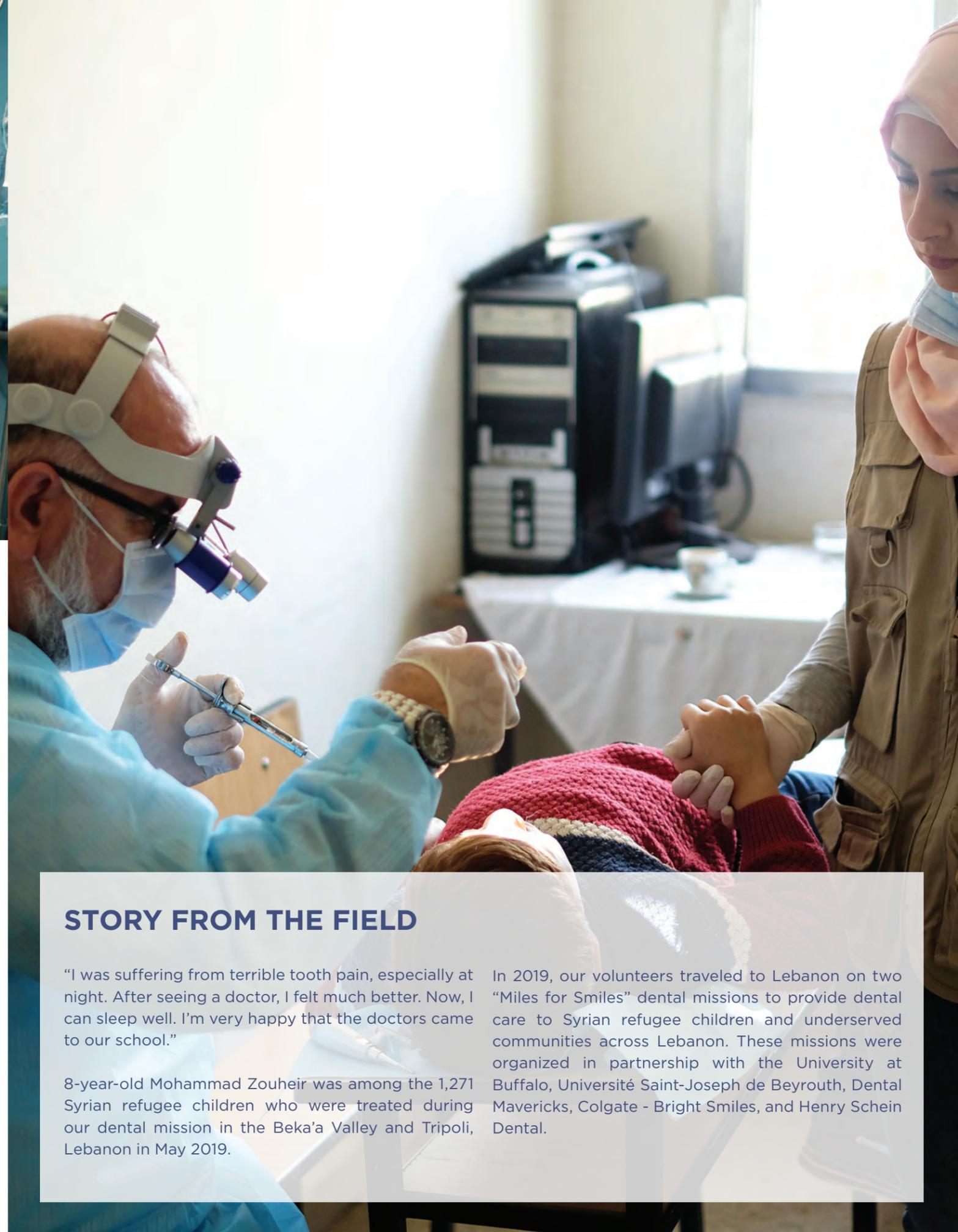
## SAMS MENTAL HEALTH CARE CLINIC

In 2019, SAMS established a psychiatric clinic in Al-Marj in the Beka’a Valley to provide MHPSS services to vulnerable populations, including Syrian and Palestinian refugees and underprivileged host communities. At the clinic, SAMS provided one-on-one sessions as well as medications. **In 2019, the clinic provided 1,594 services, including 205 new patient visits, 640 follow-up visits, 159 external referrals, and 590 prescriptions.**

## SPECIALIZED MEDICAL MISSIONS

Throughout 2019, SAMS organized seven specialized, life-altering medical missions to Lebanon, including women’s health, dental, orthopedic, and cardiology, providing care to over 4,500 Syrian refugees and underserved local communities who otherwise would have no access to these life-saving services. These missions brought together 124 volunteers from all over the world. During our women’s mission in February 2019, SAMS volunteers performed vital surgeries, including ovarian cancer and abdominal myomectomy procedures, and conducted cervical cancer screenings for women struggling to access these life-saving services.

In June 2019, SAMS also organized its first MHPSS training mission to Lebanon where volunteer mental health workers conducted specialized training for local providers. Topics included “Traumatic Brain Injury and PTSD,” “Mental Health in Primary Health Care,” “Dialectical Behavioral Therapy,” and more. **In total, four volunteers conducted 12 training sessions for 151 local mental health providers and humanitarian aid workers.**



## STORY FROM THE FIELD

“I was suffering from terrible tooth pain, especially at night. After seeing a doctor, I felt much better. Now, I can sleep well. I’m very happy that the doctors came to our school.”

8-year-old Mohammad Zouheir was among the 1,271 Syrian refugee children who were treated during our dental mission in the Beka'a Valley and Tripoli, Lebanon in May 2019.

In 2019, our volunteers traveled to Lebanon on two “Miles for Smiles” dental missions to provide dental care to Syrian refugee children and underserved communities across Lebanon. These missions were organized in partnership with the University at Buffalo, Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth, Dental Mavericks, Colgate - Bright Smiles, and Henry Schein Dental.



## COMMUNITY BASED DENTAL CARE PROGRAM

Informal settlements in Lebanon often suffer from acute shortages of dentists. Coupled with the increase in dental care costs and demand, there is a need to improve access and delivery of preventive dental care services. As a result, SAMS identified, trained, and deployed dental community health workers to implement dental screenings and preventive protocols and dental hygiene education for the Syrian refugee children living in informal settlements in the Beka'a Valley. The project referred complicated cases in need of advanced treatment and extraction to specialized clinics.

## WINTERIZATION CAMPAIGN

A strong winter storm and freezing temperatures struck Lebanon in early 2019, with devastating impacts for refugees and other vulnerable communities. As a response, SAMS activated its emergency response mechanism, providing blankets, fuel and other winterization supplies in several refugee communities in the Beka'a Valley. **Through this campaign, 1,396 displaced families received the critical supplies they needed for the winter including 1,441 children and 3,057 women.**



## STORY FROM THE FIELD

Bahaa, 3, lives with his family in Berkayel in North Lebanon. In February 2019, Bahaa's house burned down due to an electrical fire that damaged the entire property. His parents had been outside during the fire, while Bahaa was still inside with his sister.

They tried to escape from the house, but were unable to as the only exit had been blocked by the fire. Bahaa's father was finally able to get back into the house, but found Bahaa lying unconscious on the floor. He suffered from shortness of breath, dehydration and burn injuries from the incident.

Bahaa spent 10 days in the ICU at Al-Salam hospital in Tripoli. He had sustained third-degree burns and required skin graft surgeries. Bahaa needed a total of five surgeries, costing \$800 per surgery

in addition to hospitalization fees. UNHCR covered 75% of hospitalization fees for burn cases, but was unable to support the cost of skin graft surgeries.

Bahaa's father sells vegetables for a daily wage of less than \$10, an insufficient amount to make ends meet. After losing their house in the fire, the family continued to struggle financially and cover their basic needs such as food and shelter.

Bahaa also developed anxiety and sleep deprivation shortly after the accident. His mother told us he refused to leave the hospital and return home after his recovery. After being referred to SAMS for assistance, Bahaa's family received a \$500 contribution toward the hospital bill and Bahaa was able to receive the necessary care.



## KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

Years of conflict, financial crisis, and waves of displacement have placed considerable pressure on the public infrastructure in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), especially in healthcare provision. There are almost 300,000 refugees registered in Iraq, approximately 85% of whom are Syrian refugees.

In 2019, SAMS conducted one successful medical mission to KRI. A team of medical professionals were deployed to provide care for refugees and local communities, as well as perform medical consultations and deliver medical training. The team consisted of neonatologists, pediatricians, family physicians and cardiologists. **During this mission, SAMS volunteers provided services to 183 beneficiaries.**

In the Azadi Health Center and Azadi Hospital, the interventional cardiology team performed 19 catheter and stenting procedures in addition to leading lectures and workshops. Both the family medicine team and the pediatrics team provided a total of 153 medical services in the Domiz Refugee Camp. The mission leader and neonatologist conducted extensive medical classroom sessions and trainings at the Heevi Maternity Hospital and birth clinic in the Domiz Refugee Camp.

In 2019, SAMS also managed the operations of a dental clinic in Khanke Refugee Camp near Duhok, providing 756 dental services to our beneficiaries, most of whom were Yazidi IDPs. Based on the changing availability of dental services in Khanke, the clinic moved to Bardarash at the end of 2019 in order to address the greatest needs of the refugees and IDPs in the region.



## EGYPT

In 2019, SAMS returned to Egypt for the third year in a row to lead an interventional cardiology mission. From November 9 - 13, 2019, SAMS volunteers conducted 53 cardiology screenings and interventions for 36 Syrian refugees and underserved locals, placing 32 stents, and referring four patients for surgery. The team of volunteers included four interventional cardiologists, a clinical cardiologist, and a medical student. The beneficiaries ranged in age from 40 to 72 years old.

During our medical mission to Egypt in 2019, our volunteers conducted 53 cardiology screenings and interventions for 36 Syrian refugees and underserved locals, placing 32 stents.

These life-saving interventions were provided to individuals diagnosed with ischemic heart disease,

acute coronary syndrome, myocardial infarction, mitral regurgitation, and other heart-related diseases. This mission was organized in partnership with Ain Shams University, Loma Linda University, and Medtronic. During the mission, SAMS also conducted a two-day conference on best practices in interventional cardiology.

“ The feeling you get from treating patients and how grateful they are is very rewarding. The smile on their faces and words they treat you with- it's just priceless. I actually say these missions are addicting, you start and you don't stop.

- Dr. Zaki Lababidi,  
SAMS Volunteer



## SAMS GLOBAL RESPONSE

Our field team in Greece has set up emergency medical, dental, and optometry services. The team has also distributed relief supplies and aid to vulnerable individuals in need within the area. In 2019, SAMS organized and coordinated medical volunteers for deployment to Greece in 2020, home to a large number of refugees and migrants who struggle to access care. Coordination with other entities - including NGOs, UN clusters, local Ministries of Health and government officials - have also been an integral part of our activities.

### GREECE

Greece continues to experience an influx of refugees and migrants seeking shelter on both the Aegean Islands and mainland. Refugees and migrants face severe barriers and challenges to accessing healthcare, including transportation, costs, and language barriers. While the public health system remains open to emergency cases, migrant access to health services was sharply reduced in July 2019. At the same time, a number of clinics providing services to refugee populations have shut down, resulting in a steep decrease in the availability of health services for refugees and migrants.

With reduced access to the public system, refugees face substantial gaps in the provision of dental, optometry, mental health, maternal health, pediatric, and family medicine services. Sourcing appropriate health care equipment and coordinating the logistics of importing supplies have also proven to be a challenge for SAMS operations in Greece.

In 2019, SGR worked closely with multiple NGOs, local organizations, Greek health authorities, and the Athens Coordination Center for Migrant and Refugee (ACCMR) to organize aid and humanitarian services for hundreds of refugees and migrants in the Attica region of Athens.



SGR partnered with Seeds of Humanity (SoH), a local NGO based in Athens, to expand dental and optometry services to refugees and migrants who struggle to access care. SGR and SoH identified over 100 patients who had been unable to even make appointments to receive care.

### NEW ZEALAND

In the wake of the Christchurch mosque shootings that took place in March 2019, SAMS was invited to participate in a forum to engage with communities (especially Muslim communities) in New Zealand. Issues of safety, security and wellbeing were addressed. Attendees included faith leaders, interfaith activists, community initiative leaders, and representatives from Victims Support and the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand. The event was organized by the Auckland Emergency Management Department, the Auckland Council, and the Auckland Police Department. Our own Dr. Raiza Kolia joined via Skype to give a lecture on psychosocial consequences in the aftermath of mass violence, and discussed how to cope with stress and anxiety when the world no longer feels safe.





## SAMS COMMUNITY OUTREACH

SAMS Community Outreach (SCO) empowers SAMS members across the United States to engage with individuals and communities who face socio-economic barriers to receiving adequate healthcare. Through SAMS local chapters, SCO develops and implements impactful models of free healthcare provision. These programs include free clinics, free referral networks, health fairs, educational events, and disaster relief responses.

In 2019, SCO worked with four SAMS chapters to provide medical services for individuals without access to care. In coordination with SAMS Midwest Chapter, SCO opened SAMS' first free specialty clinic in Willowbrook, IL that provides free pulmonology, cardiology, endocrinology, and gynecology services for low-income, uninsured beneficiaries. SAMS Tristate and California Chapters organized multiple

health fairs, providing needed screenings and health education in underserved communities. In 2019, over 30 volunteers worked together to provide free medical services for 235 beneficiaries in three major U.S. cities. The volunteer team consisted of physicians, nurses, residents, nurses, nutritionists, and students.

The SCO team is currently developing a free oral health screening and referral network in Houston, TX, forging partnerships with existing charitable clinics to assist with sub-specialty services, building SAMS capacity to respond to US disasters, and exploring grassroots models of confronting health disparities and barriers to care in SAMS members' own communities across the country. **In 2019, 235 beneficiaries benefitted from services provided through SCO in three major U.S. cities.**



# SAMS FUNDING

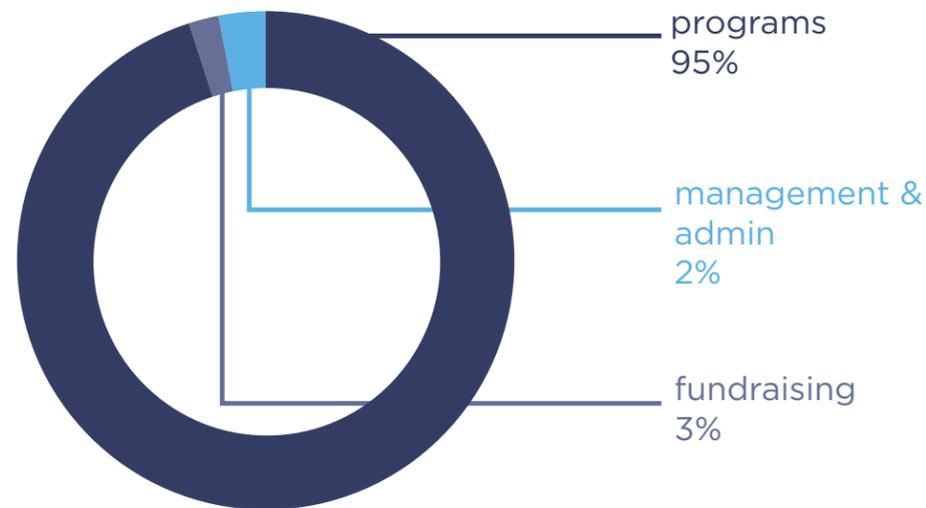
## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

SUPPORT AND OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS	2018	2019*
Contributions	\$10,568,943	\$7,643,786
Grants	\$21,762,784	\$22,188,621
Gifts in Kind	\$14,100,340	\$11,730,454
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$46,432,067</b>	<b>\$41,562,861</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$9,190,773</b>	<b>\$9,604,292</b>

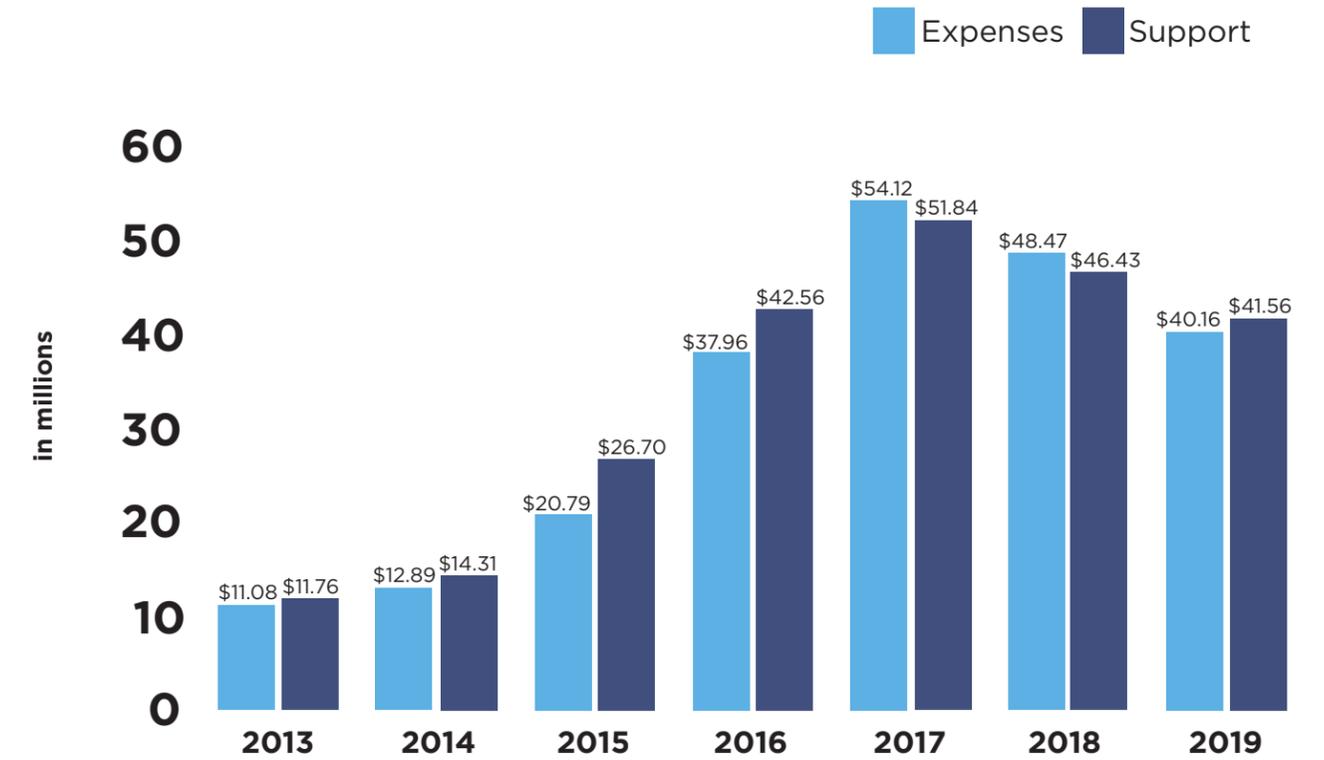
EXPENSES	2018	2019*
<b>Program Services</b>		
Medical Relief Program	\$46,356,592	\$38,219,041
<b>Supporting Services</b>		
Management and General	\$641,621	\$907,697
Fundraising	\$1,472,736	\$1,026,647
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$48,470,949</b>	<b>\$40,155,385</b>

### 2019 DISTRIBUTION OF EXPENSES

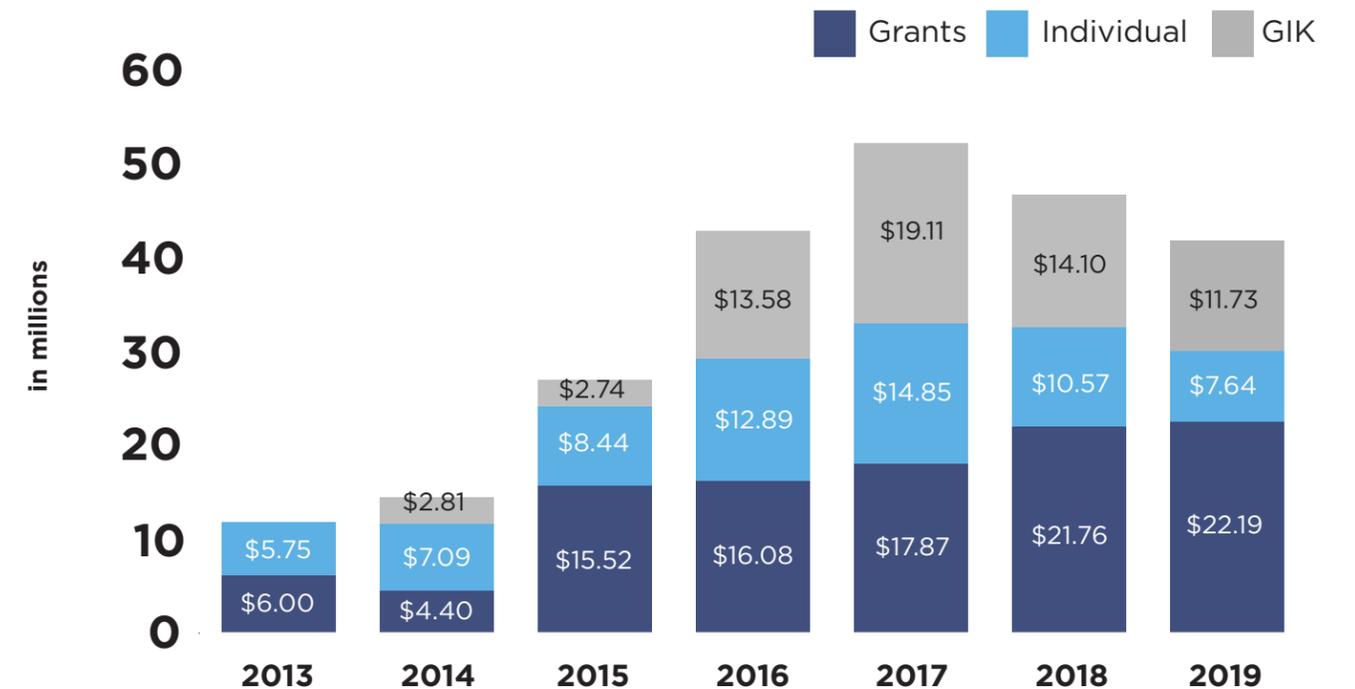


\* Numbers for FY 2019 are still preliminary.

# FINANCIALS OVER 7 YEARS INCLUDING GIFTS IN KIND



# SOURCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT





## SOCIETY

The society was founded in 1998, connecting medical professionals across the United States to provide a platform for the exchange of ideas and best practices. Our membership has grown since then, reaching 1,571 members in 2019 in 10 active chapters across the United States.

### MEMBERSHIPS

- **Affiliate/Resident Doctors:** 113
- **Allied Health Professional/Retired Physicians:** 81
- **Honorary Members:** 98
- **Practicing Physicians and Dentists:** 758
- **Students:** 521

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Through its network across the United States and beyond, SAMS Education Committee spearheads collaborative educational programs in order to support medical professionals inside Syria by providing opportunities to expand their knowledge and experiences. The SAMS Education Committee also provides medical students of Syrian descent with scholarship opportunities to pursue their education and residency programs in the United States, a career journey interrupted due to the conflict.

The committee is comprised of 21 SAMS members who dedicate a considerable amount of their time to create specific educational programs to support their peers, whether in Syria or in the United States. The committee meets on a monthly basis and leads major educational projects throughout the year.

SAMS Education Committee conducted its first online course for 28 healthcare providers inside Syria in 2019. All 28 providers successfully passed the final test. The online course included an introduction to evidence-based medicine, study design, literature search, appraising randomized trials, systematic reviews, diagnostic and observational studies, and analysing results.

### APPLICANT SUPPORT PROGRAM

This project was designed in 2019 to connect residency candidates with faculty and current residents in the United States. Current residents provided support for their applications and helped them to develop skills that would increase their

chances of succeeding during their residency interviews. SAMS received a total of 78 applicants, 51 of whom completed their applications. The majority of applicants secured a residency position. The specialties included anesthesiology, family medicine, general surgery, ophthalmology, internal medicine, radiology, neurology, OB/GYN, orthopedics, pathology, and pediatrics.

### INTERVIEW SKILLS WORKSHOP

SAMS Education Committee continues to provide support to help applicants prepare for their MATCH interviews by providing workshops on interview skills. In 2019, the committee conducted practice interview workshops in Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, and New York for 80 participants.

## MEDICAL ENGLISH PROJECT

This program aims to help medical students hone their medical English skills. 71 students applied and 51 enrolled in the English placement test. The course includes medical and scientific vocabulary, reading, listening and writing comprehension. It also covers units from anatomy, medical equipment and diagnosis, to mental health and hospital administration.

## SCHOLARSHIPS

SAMS Scholarship Program supports Syrian medical residency applicants through the provision of interest-free loans, ranging between \$1K and \$4K to cover expenses related to the MATCH season and interviews. This program has supported more than 250 Syrian medical graduates, many of whom are now practicing physicians in the United States. In 2019, the SAMS' scholarship program supported 17 medical residency applicants. The total amount of loans distributed was \$37,000. The program is self-sustained and continues to grow to support aspiring medical students of Syrian descent in the United States.

## RESEARCH & DATA

### SAMS RESEARCH COMMITTEE

SAMS has made further strides in meeting its aims of engaging in wide-ranging academic activities supporting vulnerable Syrians, whether they remain in Syria or are refugees elsewhere. SAMS members have worked with world-class institutions to develop our academic network, present our research findings, and further the mission of the newly-established research committee.

### 2019 HIGHLIGHTS

The research committee led the organization of SAMS International Conference in Berlin, Germany in June 2019. Experts on refugee health joined senior speakers from SAMS, including our president Dr. Mufaddal Hamadeh, who spoke about our work in Lebanon and our medical missions.

SAMS Turkey office director, Dr. Mazen Kewara, also spoke highlighting the consequences of the escalation of violence in northwest Syria on the health system. Dr. Majd Isreb from the nephrology committee spoke about innovations led by SAMS and his humanitarian work in Africa, and Dr. Lina Murad spoke about SAMS' work with local partners in northwest Syria in support of medical education.

We have continued our collaboration with Johns Hopkins University and UC Berkeley with a key project on the Public Health Impacts of Attacks on Healthcare in Syria. This project is funded by Research in Health and Humanitarian Crises (R2HC), a competitive funding stream that will allow the research team to explore key public health impacts in Syria. This mixed-methods investigation will explore in detail the impacts of attacks on healthcare and local populations, building research capacity within SAMS and contributing substantially to policy in the field. We have also continued our partnership with the Lancet-AUB commission on Syria where Dr. Ahmad Tarakji, former president of SAMS, is a commissioner, providing data from SAMS facilities that describe the health consequences of conflict on the population in Syria.

In addition, SAMS Research Committee members have delivered a number of presentations at academic institutions and conferences around the world, including at Sapienza University in Rome, Stanford, UC Berkeley, King's College London, the North American Refugee Health Conference (NARHC) in Toronto, and at SAMS' own annual national conference. SAMS Research Committee members and the wider membership community have also continued to contribute to academic literature relevant to SAMS research committee's aims. For a more complete list of these and other academic engagements, see the research and academic engagements section below.

SAMS Research Committee members have also received recognition and scholarships as part of their ongoing work. In late 2019, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Masri was named a recipient of the prestigious Frederick Banting and Charles Best Canada Graduate Scholarship. This award will support his Masters' thesis at the University of Calgary where he will perform research using his experiences of running novel diabetes care methods for refugees in Lebanon. For a more complete list of these and other academic engagements, see the research and academic engagements on page 62.





## RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENTS FEATURING SAMS MEMBERS

- “Coronavirus 2019 and health systems affected by protracted conflict: the case of Syria” - (IIJD), May 2020. *Authors: Dr. Aula Abbara, Dr. Ahmad Tarakji*
- “Humanitarian catastrophe for civilians in northwest Syria” - BMJ, February 2020. *Authors: Dr. Aula Abbara, Dr. Mazen Kewara, and Dr. Ahmad Tarakji*
- “The challenges of tuberculosis control in protracted conflict: The case of Syria.” - IIJD, Jan 2020. *Authors: Dr. Aula Abbara, Dr. Ibrahim Al Masri, Dr. Ahmad Tarakji, Dr. Zaher Sahloul*
- “Overcoming obstacles along the pathway of integrating Syrian healthcare professionals in Germany.”- BMJ, August 2019. *Authors: Dr. Aula Abbara, Dr. Ahmad Tarakji*
- “International failure in northwest Syria: humanitarian health catastrophe demands action” - The Lancet, July 2019. *Authors: Dr. Aula Abbara, Dr. Mohamad Katoub, Dr. Ahmad Tarakji*
- “Developing and implementing a Diabetes Care Program for urban and peri-urban Syrian refugees in Lebanon.” - NARHC, June 2019. *Presented by Dr. Ibrahim Al Masri, with a follow-up workshop on the same topic.*
- “Healthcare access for refugees in Greece: Challenges and opportunities.” Health Policy, June 2019. *Author: Dr. Aula Abbara*
- “(Re)Imagining Home: Healthcare in MENA” - Harvard, April 2019. *Presented by Dr. Ahmad Tarakji at Harvard’s 2019 Arab Conference*

## SAMS CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT

SAMS chapters across the United States continue to expand our network of medical professionals to create new programmings and educational opportunities for medical students and medical personnel inside Syria and beyond.

### CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

In May 2019, SAMS Student Members in Southern California launched its first-ever student chapter at the University of California, Irvine. The California Student Chapter is supported by and works closely with SAMS California Chapter. In its first year, SAMS California Student chapter worked with the professional chapter to organize its first health fair in California. The California Student Chapter also participated in another large health fair in Los Angeles, organized membership recruitment activities on

campus, worked with local SAMS members to organize shadowing opportunities for students, and more. SAMS California Student Chapter is a great example of a student run organization that provides health professionals with opportunities to develop their careers, to provide meaningful community health outreach to underserved communities, and to connect SAMS students with SAMS professionals.

### OHIO CHAPTER

In 2019, SAMS Ohio Chapter expanded their reach, bringing together the community. SAMS Ohio Chapter sponsored its first Medical Update Education Seminar. They successfully provided members with updates on a variety of current medical issues, as well as preventions and screening measures throughout the spectrum of medicine specialties.



## CONFERENCES

Through its annual conferences, SAMS members and field medical personnel join together to share expertise, provide updates from the field, and acquire CME credits for medical professionals in the United States.

### 8TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE

SAMS hosted its 8th National Conference in Phoenix, AZ on February 15 - 17, 2019. The conference brought together over 100 SAMS members, healthcare and humanitarian professionals, and students to discuss "At the Crossroads: Healthcare Delivery & Medical Education."

Judge Jodi Switalski discussed "America's Controlled Substance Epidemic: The Duty to Inform, Monitor, and Document." During her session, Judge Switalski explained a range of useful topics from monitoring techniques to understanding the nuances behind taking an informative patient history.

SAMS student initiatives closed the student conference program with "Onward and Upward: Developing the Next Generation of Humanitarian Leadership." SAMS Community Outreach and SAMS members shared their experiences through their medical careers, from entering medical school to professional practice and humanitarian work with SAMS. Over 20 students attended this conference. SAMS continues to support our students and develop their humanitarian and professional capacity.

### 19th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

SAMS hosted its 19th International Conference in Berlin, Germany on June 27- 29, 2019, entitled "Forced Migration & Health Care Challenges in Protracted Crisis." Throughout the conference, we heard a number of inspiring and educational discussions, including Europe's response to the refugee crisis, the health response for Syrian refugees in neighboring countries, humanitarian relief and research inside Syria and neighboring countries, training and educational opportunities for medical workers and students amidst conflict, innovative approaches to healthcare in conflict settings, the psychological aspects of protracted mass displacement, and more.





## ADVOCACY

SAMS is a leading global voice for the protection of humanitarian workers, access to health, and adherence to international humanitarian law (IHL). SAMS advocacy efforts seek to be a voice for humanitarian workers and civilians who find themselves caught in the midst of ongoing conflict in Syria, as well as for refugees in neighboring countries. SAMS continues to advocate for an end to the targeting of healthcare and access to humanitarian aid for all Syrians.

This past year saw increased opportunities to engage directly with key decision-makers, including briefing the UN Security Council, meeting with government ministers in EU capitals, and engaging with Members of Congress and the US Administration in Washington.

## UNITED NATIONS ADVOCACY

SAMS continues to play a leading role in advocacy at the UN on the issues of humanitarian assistance and protection of humanitarian workers. This has involved regular meetings and engagements with UN Member States, UN agencies, and UN accountability mechanisms.

In June 2019, SAMS Executive Director, David Lillie, briefed the UN Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria as part of the Council's monthly humanitarian briefing. He described the suffering of civilians in Syria, as well as the ongoing dangers faced by humanitarian workers. Following his remarks, SAMS was invited to meet with Mark Lowcock, the Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, to discuss ideas for improving humanitarian assistance in Syria. During September's UN General Assembly meeting, SAMS President Dr. Mufaddal Hamadeh met with senior officials from the US, France, and Turkey, and attended side events on protection of humanitarian workers and mental health. Dr. Farida, one of SAMS doctors working on the ground in Syria, appeared via video at a side event on providing humanitarian assistance to women and girls.

In October 2019, as part of International Law Week, SAMS Foundation Chair Dr. Maher Azzouz participated in a panel sponsored by the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM), which focused on accountability for attacks on health.



SAMS also continues to serve as a civil society representative to the UN-led peace talks in Geneva, where we push for the continued prioritization of medical neutrality, accountability, and adherence to IHL throughout the negotiations.

*“It is critically important that we continue to support humanitarian workers. They are the bright lights in a very dark conflict. We must all work together to support and protect them, and ensure that they have adequate resources to carry out their work.”*

**-David Lillie,  
SAMS Executive Director**

## EUROPEAN UNION ADVOCACY

In 2019, SAMS continued to build and strengthen relationships with European governments and NGOs. SAMS visited key European capitals as part of efforts to secure more financial support for our relief programs in the region, as well as public support for our humanitarian principles. This involved holding

meetings in France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg, Hungary, Poland, Switzerland, Portugal, and the Netherlands.

In March, SAMS participated in the third EU-UN sponsored Syria donor conference in Brussels, titled “Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region.” SAMS Turkey Country Director, Dr. Mazen Kewara, delivered remarks during the general session of the conference which focused on the need for accountability and protection of humanitarian workers. In addition, SAMS held meetings with senior officials from key donor countries and with partner NGOs, as well as participating in several side events.

SAMS, together with the Syrian NGO Alliance (SNA), also hosted a side-event focused on aid diversion, which brought together senior officials from the largest state humanitarian donors in an effort to adopt common practices against diversion efforts. In June, SAMS leadership held meetings at the German Chancellery with the Middle East advisors to the Chancellor, as well as with senior officials at the German Foreign Office. SAMS leadership also held meetings at the Elysee Palace in Paris, and with senior EU Commission officials in Brussels.



## REGIONAL ADVOCACY

SAMS has worked to increase our advocacy efforts in support of access to health and medical education for refugees, as well as support for survivors of GBV. This has involved increased engagement with host governments, UN agencies, and NGOs.

In Lebanon, SAMS is an active member of the Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF), and conducts regular engagement with UN agencies and the relevant ministries of the Lebanese Government.

SAMS also worked with partners to increase awareness around the lack of access to health for refugees, particularly mental health care.

In addition, SAMS arranged meetings with senior officials for actress Amber Heard during her visit to Lebanon.

In Jordan, SAMS continues to expand our relationships with Jordanian authorities, including new engagement with members of the Jordanian Parliament. SAMS also played an increased role in several regional NGO forums, including SIRF, advocating for the protection of humanitarian workers. In September Dr. Maher Azzouz, SAMS Chairman, spoke at a conference in Amman hosted by the Council of Europe, which focused on the economic potential of diasporas.

In Turkey, SAMS continues to lead advocacy efforts on cross-border assistance in coordination with local and international NGOs, UN agencies, and the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. SAMS advocacy efforts in Turkey also prioritized protection of humanitarian workers and continued access for health personnel, equipment, and supplies.

SAMS advocacy in Turkey has worked towards improving coordination with Turkish humanitarian agencies, including AFAD and the Turkish Red Crescent, as well as undertaking high-level engagements with officials in the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

“ I want to thank an American group, the Syrian American Medical Society. What SAMS has done to provide medical care and the work of our Syrian-American physicians has been heroic, and I want to acknowledge that.

-Senator Tim Kaine



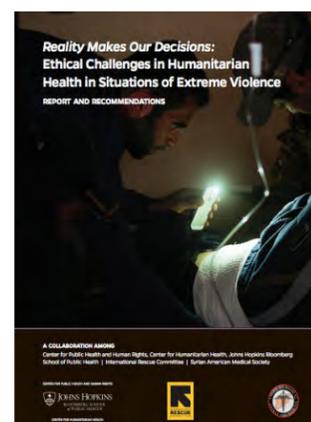
## US GOVERNMENT AND CONGRESSIONAL ADVOCACY

SAMS members, staff, and leadership regularly meet with Members of Congress and their staff, as well as with officials at the White House, State Department, and US Agency for International Development. This engagement has resulted in increased humanitarian assistance for Syria and neighboring countries, visas for Syrian students to study medicine in the US, and a stronger US position on accountability for attacks on health.

SAMS has also undertaken advocacy before the US Congress and Administration in our role as members of the InterAction working groups on Syria, Iraq, Protection, and GBV. As part of these working groups, SAMS has met with Congressional staff to discuss issues including humanitarian access, the protection of humanitarian workers, and the critical need for

support of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) programming. Through these working groups, SAMS has also signed letters to members of Congress and the Administration advocating for greater access and support for humanitarian programming in Syria and the region.

In May, SAMS sponsored and organized advocacy events for the “Hope of Syria” robotics team, composed of a group of middle-school students who are refugees living in the Beka’a Valley of Lebanon. The team was hosted by senior officials at the State Department, met with National Security Council staff at the White House, and met with Members of Congress on Capitol Hill. The team advocated for greater access to health and education for refugees.



## PARTNERS AND COALITIONS

SAMS is a member of multiple coalitions and working groups that collaborate on advocacy and operational planning.

### U.S. Based Coalitions:

- American Relief Coalition for Syria (ARCS)
- #WithSyria Coalition
- InterAction
- Crisis Action
- Safeguarding Health in Conflict

### Field Based Coalitions:

- Turkey NGO Forum
- Jordan INGO Forum (JIF)
- Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF)
- Syria INGO Regional Forum (SIRF)
- Syrian NGO Alliance (SNA)
- The League of Syrian Networks (SLN)
- NW Syria NGO Forum

## REPORTS

- *Reality Makes our Decisions: Ethical Challenges in Humanitarian Health in Situations of Extreme Violence*
- *Northwest Syria: Winter at the Doors*
- *Forced Migration & Health Care Challenges in Protracted Crisis*
- *Regional to Global Transition of Refugee Mental Health Towards Resilience*



In the wake of the escalation in northwest Syria that began in late April 2019, SAMS partnered with WWE Superstar Sami Zayn for the third time on a fundraising campaign to provide urgent medical care to those impacted by heightened attacks on civilians. Funds raised went towards establishing a new mobile clinic in the Idlib countryside, home to hundreds of thousands of IDPs who struggle to access care.



“ I’ve partnered with SAMS and they’re the ones doing all the legwork here, and they’ve deployed multiple mobile clinics... Mobile clinics are a very cost-effective and sustainable way and a safe way to deliver primary medical care, directly to the people in need.

-Sami Zayn,  
WWE Superstar

## CELEBRITY ENGAGEMENT

In February 2019, SAMS Goodwill Ambassador Amber Heard joined our women’s health mission to Lebanon, supporting Syrian refugee women and underserved local communities who have limited access to the treatment they need. This is the second time Amber accompanied SAMS on a medical mission.

During her visit, Amber visited SAMS’ psychosocial support programs which provide services to women and children in informal settlements for Syrian refugees living in the Beka’a Valley. She also visited a local hospital in Tripoli where SAMS volunteers performed surgeries, including ovarian cancer and abdominal myomectomy procedures, in addition to providing cervical cancer screenings for women struggling to access these life-saving services.

A month after she returned from the trip, Amber Heard joined SAMS Midwest Chapter Annual Gala as the keynote speaker, honoring the resilience and strength of Syrian women in displacement. In her remarks, Amber spoke about the impact that our medical missions had on her. She shared the stories of some of the inspiring individuals she spoke to and the dedication and selflessness of SAMS volunteers she met during our missions.

“ If there’s anything that I have learned from my work with SAMS it is that the human capacity for empathy can be boundless. It’s what connects us to each other. It’s not where we come from. It’s our shared, common humanity that binds us.

- Amber Heard,  
Actress and Activist



## MEDIA RELATIONS

SAMS continues to be engaged in proactive communications to build awareness, enhance credibility, and support our fundraising efforts. Through well-designed and executed strategic media, public relations efforts and celebrity engagement, SAMS has reached over half a million followers across its social media outlets. **In 2019, SAMS was mentioned in 224 news media articles.**



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