Sixty Years of Service

1950

The first emergency aid for Chinese civil war refugees arrives in Hong Kong.
Sixty Years of Sweeping Changes, Human Constants

Direct Relief International was founded in the aftermath of World War II with the simple aim of helping people in postwar Europe who were living under tremendous hardship. They were caught in challenging circumstances, as history moved forward on a hopeful path from a dark period.

Since that time, the accelerated march of progress—in science, technology, communications, health care, agriculture, and economics—has been remarkable and worldwide in scale. The global tide of the human condition has risen, as measured by child survival, access to food and water, longevity, prosperity, and educational opportunities.

But humanitarian challenges persist. Poverty and poor health still reinforce each other, creating enormous obstacles for an estimated one billion people. Those who are poor get sick, stay sick longer, and die earlier than those who are not. And people who are sick tend to become poor because they cannot work and spend whatever they may have trying to access health services that are frequently sub-standard.

Amid the sweeping changes of the last 60 years, Direct Relief has remained focused on helping those caught in the undertow of history’s rising tide. In 1948, our war-refugee founders William Zimdin and Dennis Karczag provided—initially with their own funds—food, clothing, and medical aid to people living through the difficult period of postwar recovery in Europe. They recognized that private efforts were crucial to reach beneath the large-scale government-led rebuilding programs underway.

Today, Direct Relief’s assistance is focused on health, bringing medical and financial resources (including essential medical products donated by many of the world’s leading healthcare companies) to health professionals serving impoverished people in communities around the world. In areas where governments and global markets are either unable or unwilling to engage, these efforts are essential to improve the health of people who are sick or hurt.

Despite the changed circumstances, location, scale, and techniques of our work, the humanitarian focus and attention to the efficient use of resources have remained constant. So too has the approach of supporting local efforts in a respectful manner and without regard to race, ethnicity, politics, religion, gender, or ability to pay.

In Fiscal Year 2008, Direct Relief’s humanitarian assistance provided more help, to more people, in more places than at any time in our history. Our assistance programs increased by over 50 percent from the previous year—funded entirely with private support. Sixty years into our mission, the simple goal of enabling people to live healthy, productive lives—regardless of the circumstances into which they are born or find themselves—remains a powerful incentive. The tremendous improvement in overall living standards creates a sharpened humanitarian imperative to assist those whose lives remain threatened by sickness, disease, and injury that can be easily diagnosed and treated.

Helping Expectant Mothers Protect Their Babies

EVERY 48 SECONDS, A CHILD IS INFECTED WITH HIV, THE VIRUS THAT CAUSES AIDS. This is a profound human tragedy whose primary cause is preventable. Without medical intervention, the chance that a mother will pass along the virus to her child is as high as 30 percent, but with proper testing and therapy, this chance can be nearly eliminated.

Direct Relief and corporate partner Abbott are working to eliminate the barriers to the testing of pregnant women for HIV in countries where mothers and their children face the greatest threat. In 2007, Direct Relief began distributing free, Abbott-donated Determine® HIV rapid test kits. Sixty-nine developing countries are eligible for the program, including all countries in Africa, where the burden of HIV is heaviest.

This program, along with Direct Relief’s antiretroviral therapy drug program which began last year, represents a huge leap forward in helping health providers identify and combat HIV across the globe.
of involving health centers and clinics in emergency planning, preparedness, and real-time transmission of medical information to connect AIMS hospital staff with otherwise disenfranchised patients.

With funding from Direct Relief, the Austin Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMS) in southeastern India equipped a telemedicine van (left) to bring care to the many people too remote, sick, or poor to get to a hospital. Since its delivery, the van has brought state-of-the-art care to 40,000 people in tsunami-affected communities, using videoconferencing and real-time transmission of medical information to connect AIMS hospital staff with partner clinics—serving a combined 670,000 patients annually—with Lantus insulin donated by sanofi-aventis, pharmaceuticals and medical equipment.

With funding from Direct Relief, the Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMS) in southwestern India equipped a telemedicine van to bring care to the many people too remote, sick, or poor to get to a hospital.

As soon as the violence broke out, Direct Relief wired $25,000 to OGRA to purchase needed medical supplies, including $200,000 in surgical instruments, as requested by the villagers. Direct Relief also provided $57 million in direct aid, including over $1 million in cash assistance to displaced families, supply essential medicines, and support surgeons, doctors, and nurses.

Direct Relief has supported earthquake-affected communities in Pakistan with over $7.5 million (wholesale), representing 1.5 million courses of treatment, and over $1 million in grants to 11 local healthcare organizations.

In December 2004, Direct Relief's sixty-year history includes a tradition of providing prompt and needed medical and financial assistance to ensure that medical care is available and accessible to those who need it most.

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Our Investors

On the occasion of Direct Relief’s 60th anniversary, we recognize with deepest thanks the following investors, whose generosity has enabled service to millions of people throughout the world.

100% OF CONTRIBUTIONS ARE DEVOTED TO OUR PROGRAMS. All overhead (non-program) expenses are covered by a generous bequest.

Newlyweds
Sincerely, the newlyweds, like Andrew Papisano and his new wife Bonnie Boulekis, can lavish wedding guests with Direct Relief’s charitable gifts. Visit www.DirectRelief.org for more information.

Anniversary Sponsors
Abbott, Bi-Lo, FedEx, and Montecito Bank & Trust joined us in celebrating our 60th birthday with generous gifts that will support key programs.

Youth for Direct Relief
A dynamic group of students from five local high schools raise funds and awareness for Direct Relief projects around the world. Be on the lookout for their annual flower sale in March!

who’s thinking of Direct Relief?

America’s largest nonprofit evaluator of Direct Relief’s programs. For more information, visit www.slamdunk.org

Direct Relief's longest-running corporate partner continues its support in a myriad of ways, bolstering hurricane response, matching employee-gifts, and supporting safe childbirth programs. In honor of their employees, these AkI CRBs recently gave generous cash gifts.

TEA FIRE RESPONSE

Direct Relief worked closely with public health and emergency management from the moment the Tea Fire broke out in Montecito, California foothills on November 13. Direct Relief made its inventory of medical supplies available to responding agencies, and immediately began coordinating distribution of 900 particulate masks with Santa Barbara County Public Health. Thousands of free masks were given to responding personnel, local residents, nonprofit, clinics, and schools.

Respiratory conditions were also a major concern of those affected by the Tea Fire in Los Angeles County. Direct Relief delivered medical material and—incuding authorship alphabets and meals—to partner agencies in Oxnard, Tujunga, Garden Grove, and Las Angeles.

Many thanks to BI, CVS, FedEx, GlobalMed, Johnson & Johnson, Neutrogena, Sunstar Pharmaceuticals, and Zeta Medical for their generous donations in these efforts.

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