

HABIBI
INTERNATIONAL

2022
Annual
Report



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MISSION

Habibi International is a nonprofit organization that seeks to transform the lives of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Middle East through humanitarian relief and sustainable development in partnerships with like-minded entities.

VISION

To see transforming communities birthed among the persecuted and displaced in the Middle East.





VALUES

01

We Follow Jesus

We take our cue from someone who was once a refugee and who understands suffering intimately. His message of hope, healing and freedom is what keeps us going. His approach of doing life with people - including those that society despised or did not protect - guides ours.



02

We Value People

We're not here to run a program or complete a project - we're here to come alongside friends who have tremendous dignity and worth.



03

We Pursue Partnerships

We can't take on the world's immense challenges alone, neither are we supposed to. We believe that everyone brings unique strengths to the table, and collaborations with others - especially local communities - are our best shot at moving the needle on issues.



04 We Are Pioneers

We aren't afraid to do what others have not done before. We create platforms so that others can also serve.



05 We Respect Local Cultures

We are constantly learning from and amazed by the beauty and diversity of the cultures we get to encounter. Our local team is a microcosm of the multicultural society we work in, with all ethnicities and faiths.



06 We Practice Servant Leadership

We recognize that some of the areas we work in have painful histories of exploitation. We are here not to take but to give, not to be served but to serve.



MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

“Will you stay and help us?” is a question we frequently hear from our Yazidi friends. Unfortunately, just as COVID-19 shut the entire world down these past few years, so it had for Habibi International as well in the early months of the pandemic. Yet what we now know is that God was quietly preparing us for long-term, sustainable humanitarian work that is continually yielding significant fruit, as you will discover in this annual report.

There are two major developments in particular that I wish to highlight: First, in 2022 we completed our very first Community Center within Bersive 2 Camp for internally displaced persons. This modern and beautiful center has five trailers, each dedicated to a specific purpose, plus a large multi-purpose hall. This Center serves as the physical base for most of our work in Zakho.

Secondly, God has been calling people from the USA, Singapore, Taiwan, and other countries internationally to come to live and work together. Our in-country team has grown to consist of 24 international and local staff members. The field team is currently led by Willy Tan, Jonathan Su, and Heidi Tan. As we continue to grow, we expect more to join us in 2023 and onward.

There has been so much to celebrate in 2022, one of which was our 1,000th dental patient treated at the Community Center dental clinic. What a wonderful joy it was to see a smile on his face! We also had the privilege of partnering with specialized surgical teams in orthopedics, urogynecology, cleft lip/palate, and ophthalmology which allowed us to help hundreds of our patients to stand, walk, smile, see, and experience relief from chronic pain. Even during the recovery period, our nurses and therapists continue to visit patients and their families, bringing with them care and hope.

However, we are also mindful that this is the eighth year of the Yazidi exodus from their homeland in Sinjar. Although many have returned despite poor living conditions, many have also chosen to remain in the UN camps. The greatest challenges continue to be insecurity in their homeland and the lack of basic financial security. As you will read in our section highlighting mental health, depression and resultant suicides are rampant amongst the Yazidi people. Understanding the gravity of this situation, we have dedicated teams who are reaching out to our friends who are suffering. Our goal and hope is to train local mental health workers and to promote awareness that will lead to holistic wellness.

Despite the chronic and persistent physical, financial, and emotional needs that exist among the displaced, we still hear news of many NGOs that are leaving the region. Though the work is no doubt challenging in many ways, we are committed to stay, to seek out solutions, and to walk beside the displaced. Thank you for praying, supporting, participating, and sharing Habibi International's work with others. Your partnership has sustained our long obedience in the same direction. We know your steadfast commitment to relief and development will better the lives of those we serve, thus demonstrating God's love for the "least of these."

In His time He makes all things and people beautiful,



Dr David Yue
Board Chair
Habibi International



PHYSICAL HEALTH

Medical/Surgical

- Performed **78 surgeries**, including orthopedic¹, urogynecological², cleft lip³ and cataract⁴
- Conducted **467 rehabilitation and follow-up sessions** that involved post-surgical wound care and working with patients and caregivers on physical therapy exercises
- Conducted **vision clinics**, including screening and dispensing of prescription eyeglasses, for **325** individuals
- Involved **53** participants in **community health sessions**, teaching first aid and baby swaddling to reduce risk of hip displacement for infants

¹ Dr. James Lau/HIS Foundation

² Dr. William Han/Surgical Education International

³ Dr. David Nguyen/Heavenly Plastic Surgery

⁴ Dr. Jacob Cheng/Eagle Eye Centre



Story from the Field: Medical/Surgical

“No one thought he would ever walk.”

“May God bless you - I can see!”

“He’s so happy. He can go to school now!”

“I can sleep well through the night for the first time (in 20 years).”

These are just some of what our surgical patients and their caregivers shared with us this past year, on how the surgeries have changed their lives.

As global travel picked back up, we were able to again partner with surgeons and their teams to come over to perform different types of procedures, to meet the wide range of medical needs on the ground. This has truly been life-changing for many who would otherwise not have access to such services.



But beyond the most salient presenting physical conditions, we recognize each patient is multi-dimensional, and also an integral part of a larger family. Through our multidisciplinary field team of our physical therapists and nurses (wound care and rehabilitation), social workers (mental health support), and other staff (social support), we have been able to better support them and their families in holistic ways, and get to know them more deeply.

For example, special bonds were formed between our urogynecological patients and team, as the procedures were very personal to them, and we also paid them frequent post-surgical visits. Through these, we eventually got to know several of their daughters as well, who then joined a young women's psycho-social support program at our center.

With our center, we've also been so encouraged to see children with physical disabilities be able to get out of their tents and mingle with other children. Take our orthopedic patient, V, for example. On several occasions, a group of her friends walked her slowly all the way to our center from the neighboring camp, so that they could play together with other children in our multi-purpose hall!

--Heidi Tan, Iraq Operations Director

“

But beyond the most salient presenting physical conditions, we recognize each patient is multi-dimensional, and also an integral part of a larger family.

”



PHYSICAL HEALTH

Dental

- Ended our service in Hizawa Village and moved our dental clinic into Bersive 2 Camp
- Screened **1,711** individuals and treated **1,813** patients through **extractions, fillings, x-rays, scaling and polishing**
- Conducted **oral hygiene education sessions** for **120** children and their parents, covering topics like how to brush their teeth and having a balanced diet



Story from the Field: Dental

On December 6, 2022, Habibi's in-camp dental clinic welcomed patient #1,000 from Bersive 1 and 2 Camps. It was indeed a milestone.

I remember that on the opening day just six months earlier, our dentist, Dr Hassan, texted me that there were no patients in the clinic! The patient 'traffic' flow did seem rather slow in the beginning. But momentum started to pick up within a week, and even turned 'chaotic' as those who came all wanted to be seen on the same day. Gradually, the patients learned how our appointment system and cards worked.



It was during that period of time that I complained to our dental assistants that our patients seldom said 'thank you'. So when patient Z came in one day bearing a bagful of snacks for us, I was taken aback. It was as if God was telling me: "You are wrong, Ginny. There is one!" Funnily, many started to say 'thank you' soon after. My assistant and I always laugh over this incident.

Coming back to Z, I was shocked and perplexed when I first saw the condition of his teeth: all his permanent teeth were severely eroded, and it was almost as if some of his side frontal teeth would snap! How would I start? "God, please help," I prayed. As I committed this matter to Him, I saw Him provide.

Z faithfully turned up for all his appointments. And the filling material we needed for him was just enough. When the treatment was finally complete, I asked him if he was happy with the 'transformation'. He replied that his mother was very happy, his relatives and friends were happy, and yes, he was very happy!

God showed me something through working with Z. I saw His abundance and goodness. And He is not in a hurry!

--Ginny Lau, Dental Therapist



“

When the treatment was finally complete, I asked him if he was happy with the 'transformation'. He replied that his mother was very happy, his relatives and friends were happy, and yes, he was very happy!

”

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental and Emotional Health

- Launched our Mental Health & Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) program
- Assessed **42** potential clients for **intake** and opened **19 cases** (ongoing)
- Held **109 case sessions**, involving **individual counseling and home visits**, as well as **therapeutic play** for young clients
- Conducted **3** runs of **Shine**, a nine-week **personal development and group mentoring** program, with **21** young women
- Conducted **3 training sessions** on suicide awareness and the power of listening for **47** local participants who are working in NGOs



Story from the Field: Mental and Emotional Health

Following the completion of our community center, we started receiving a few people who walked into our center requesting MHPSS services. During the MHPSS team's first tent visit, we found ourselves in the home of a grieving lady. She had been suffering from anxiety and insomnia following the death of one of her daughters due to a tragic car accident. While she was already receiving regular psychological support from the camp's primary healthcare clinic, she was comforted by our visit.



But the timing of our visit could not be more divine, as nearing the end of the visit, her nephew from a nearby village popped by. We quickly learnt that he, too, had been suffering from sleep issues and had attempted suicide, and we offered our support. We were later pleasantly surprised that even with the sense of stigma surrounding psychological support - especially for young men - he showed up for his first counseling session at our center. He became our first official counseling client that kickstarted our MHPSS service.

At the same time, (known) suicide attempts, some unfortunately more lethal and completed, was a rising trend in Bersive 2 and the surrounding camps. Referrals of residents who had attempted suicide and thankfully survived, started trickling in. Those who responded to our outreach slowly became our teachers to what lives post-genocide in an overstayed camp with a myriad of structural and systemic problems looks like. Each day that the residents choose to live on, speaks so much of their resilience. We learn to sit with their pain and helplessness with no easy solutions to offer, but starting with our friendships and presence.

--Ruth Wei, Senior Social Worker



“

We were later pleasantly surprised that even with the sense of stigma surrounding psychological support - especially for young men - he showed up for his first counseling session at our center.

”

SOCIAL HEALTH

Education

- Launched the **Sing Your English program**, which brings children through progressive levels of English learning starting with phonics, with **164** students aged 7-14 years
- Launched regular **English courses** for youths/young adults, with **32** students completing at least one level
- Conducted **English Corner**, a conversational English program, with **144** students

Computer

- Remodeled our storage space to be a **Learning Lab** housing computer classes and work, with pro bono design work by **Rive Design Studio**
- Conducted **computer classes** in computer literacy and design for **52** participants
- Continued a **remote work program** for **6** young adults
- Ongoing **open office hours** for individuals to use laptops



Story from the Field: Education

When we asked residents in the camp what they hoped to see at our center, one of the most frequent answers we received was: English classes. We were thus excited to launch Sing Your English (SYE), a program that uses songs, dance, games and other fun activities to teach children English. It taps on children's innate skills, like listening and imitation, to create memorable and engaging lessons that build confidence and joy in learning.

When we first launched the program in the summer, the response was overwhelming. But more than that, outside the classroom, we also see the children singing and doing actions to the songs and words they have learned in class. K was part of the first batch of students. One day, he saw me and brought a friend along with him to meet me. After engaging both of them for a while, K started talking to his friend in Kurdish. But soon after, I realized K was teaching his friend the English words and songs he had learnt in class! I was amazed. These children have the potential to be teachers to their friends!

Importantly, we also identified and trained four locals living in the camp to run the program. We journey with these teachers as they teach, and it is just as encouraging to witness their growth as they guide these children. To quote one of the teachers: *"We are influencing the next generation."*

--Germaine Tay, Program Manager

“

I was amazed. These children have the potential to be teachers to their friends!

”



ECONOMIC HEALTH

Love and Relief Initiatives

- Provided **kerosene for new Syrian refugees** who arrived in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in the middle of winter
- Helped **furnish a new ward** in the Zakho Emergency Hospital
- **Built a garage** housing a fire engine in Chamishku Camp, for quicker response to any outbreaks of fire in the camp
- Provided **school supplies and warm clothes** for **120** school-going children



SPECIAL PROJECTS

Community Center in an IDP Camp

Our center was officially completed and launched this year, through the efforts of a design team based around the world and a local construction team.

The field team also developed a **vision for the center** to guide what we do and how we do it:

- A center that is **accessible** to the community, **empowers** the community, and **serves** its own community.
- A center that allows the community to **rebuild**, **restore** and **redeem** what was lost, through a new generation of its people.
- A center rooted in the community, where residents can **showcase and celebrate** their culture, art, identity, and strengths.
- A center that is full of joy, fun, laughter, love, life, and even messiness, so that it might become a place of **hope**, **peace**, **safety**, and **peace-making**.
- A center where people find **friends and servants**, who come alongside them, enter their homes, and journey with them through deep relationships, **demonstrating God's love** through their lives.
- A center that is **open and flexible** to mobilize people of all **cultures**, **faiths**, **backgrounds**, and **skills**, to create something beautiful together through the favor God has given Habibi International.

Besides **five program trailers**, we also earmarked space for a **multi-purpose hall** and **playspace**.

SuperAdobe Hall:

- We wanted our center to house a large multi-purpose space - something not available at all within the camp - for **indoor activities, gatherings, and other community events**.
- Instead of defaulting to a regular 'container' hall, we decided to try out the SuperAdobe method - **an innovation from traditional earth-based architecture**, and thus familiar in concept to the local community. It is **more environmentally friendly** due to the use of natural materials and less use of concrete, and also **increases thermal lag** so that the building stays cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.



- We partnered with **Vide Terra** to teach locals the building technique and supervise the construction of the hall.
- Today, the hall has many regular functions, such as:
 - A **drop-in center** for children/youth where they can play, hang out, read and study
 - **Dance and exercise sessions** for youth and girls
 - Volunteer-led activities like **drawing classes**
 - **Medical screenings**
 - Large group staff gatherings, such as **birthday and cultural celebrations**
- We have also started opening the hall for use by the larger community, such as through **camp-wide awareness sessions** on gender-based violence and fire prevention, screening of the **World Cup 2022 Finals**, and an **engagement party**.



Co-designed Inclusive Playspace:

- When building our center, we had envisioned it to be a safe space for residents to gather. At the same time, we noticed that **children in the camps need more safe, child-friendly spaces where they can play, learn and grow**. We thus decided to build an open playspace in the middle of our center.
- As we wanted the children living in the camp to have ownership of the space, we decided to build it through a **participatory approach**. We did this in partnership with UK-based charity, **Catalytic Action**, with much experience in such built interventions. Close to **130 children** (aged 4-14 years old), including some with disabilities, took part in the design process. We also approached **adult stakeholders**, such as parents, teachers and other local NGO workers, for input.



- Catalytic Action’s architectural team **integrated all the ideas into a technical design**, taking into consideration constraints of space, and available material and expertise. We then recruited a local team to bring the space to life.
- The playspace has since become **one of the most popular spaces in the camp**. We receive a steady stream of children, who are learning how to play freely but within the boundaries of center rules, and whom our staff take turns to supervise. Youth and young adults also come to hang out or play volleyball with friends. Adults with caregiving responsibilities but who also need to come to the center for other services are now able to let their children play in a safe environment as well.



Story from the Field: Community Center

One of the beautiful things about the center is how it brings all our different programs, people and places together, to jointly support camp residents holistically.

10-year-old G started hanging around our center to play, even before it was completed. We first got to know him as a mischievous little boy, often getting into scrapes and fights with other children from the camp. But when we launched our Sing Your English (SYE) program, he signed himself up and made friends with 11-year-old S, an eager, helpful boy. They soon became inseparable, and we noticed that S started to be a positive influence on G.

One day in SYE class, the children were learning how to introduce themselves. But when our teachers asked about his family, G burst into tears. They then found out that while the rest of his classmates have large families, G is the only child of a single mother.



The teachers consulted our social workers, who decided to pay G and his mother a visit. They discovered that G's mother had worried about him spending too much time on her phone, but yet was afraid to let him out of their tent, as he had gotten into bad company and - as we had seen - would get into fights on the streets in the camp.

But since the opening of the center, G's mother has been less anxious about him and has seen a change in his behavior for the better. It has truly been a joy for the team to watch the transformation in G as well. In fact, he was recently appointed one of the playspace monitors, with responsibilities to remind the other children of the center rules, and help keep the space clean and tidy! G also continues to attend English classes and therapeutic sessions regularly at the center.

--Heidi Tan, Iraq Operations Director

“

But since the opening of the Center, G's mother has been less anxious about him and has seen a change in his behavior for the better.

”



FIELD STAFF

Personnel

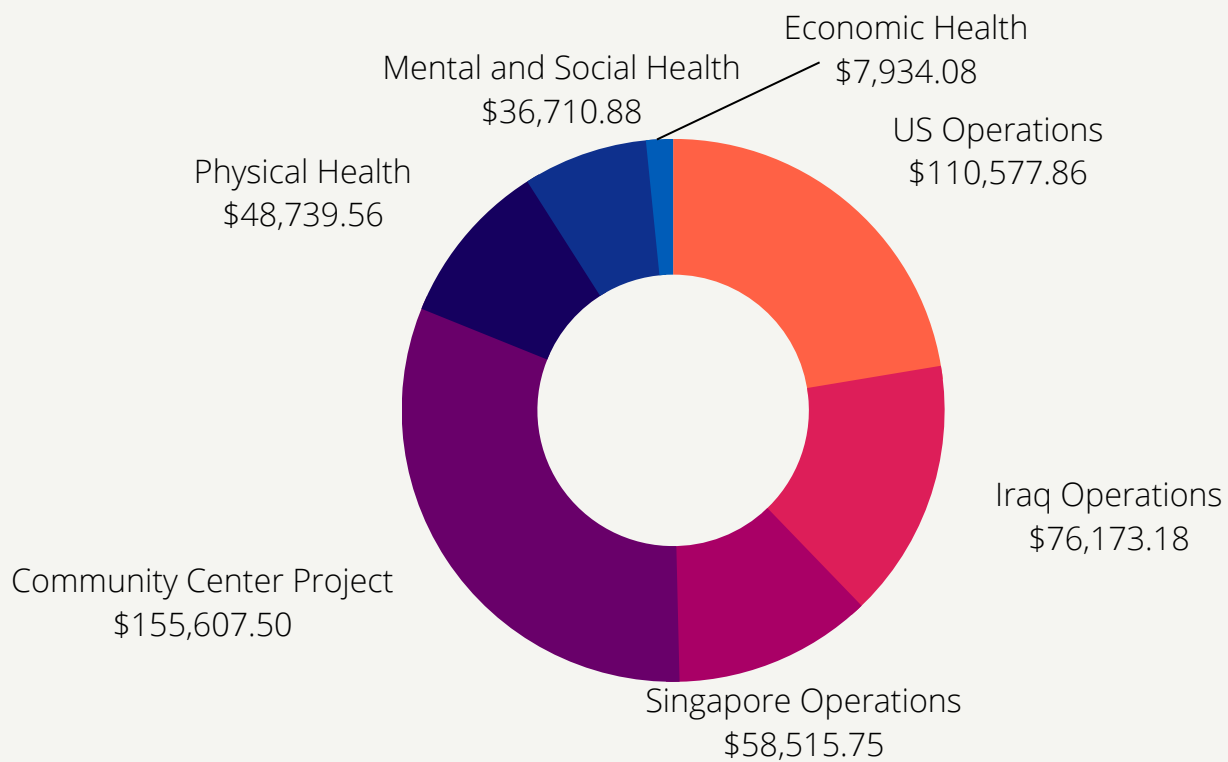
- Expanded our **local team** to **15** center/program staff and **3** administrative staff
- Expanded our **international team** to **4** full-time staff
- Hosted **4 interns** for a 6- to 8-month internship, with some to return as full-time staff in 2023
- Hosted **4 volunteers** who served for 1 to 3 months

Short-term Volunteer Teams

- Hosted **7 surgical teams** and **2 education teams**



EXPENDITURES



TOTAL EXPENDITURES: \$435,743.06

TOTAL DONATIONS: \$587,389.70

Habibi International's US and Singapore offices are separate legal entities but their finances are reported together in this report for simplicity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Habibi International Board Members

David Yue--Board Chair
Willy Tan--CEO
Daniel Chung--Treasurer
Samantha Cao--Secretary
Michael Chen
Peter Chiu
Danny Chu
Jerry Tzou

Habibi Singapore Board Members

Ng Zhi-Wen--Board Chair
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Richard Hui
Evelyn Loh

Program Advisers

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Amy Lee--Mental Health
Eunice Shen--Rehabilitation
Stephanie Tsang--Education
Jerry Tzou--Dental
Connie Yue--Women

US Team

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Elizabeth Lee--Controller
Richard Cao--Creative Director
Michael Mow--Logistics Manager
Jack Chao--Bookkeeper

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Eunju Chang--Physical Therapist
Germaine Tay--Education Program Manager
Ginny Lau--Dental Therapist
Hadia Khudida--Nurse
Hassan Ali--Dentist
Hassan Hndko--Nurse
Heidi Tan--Director of Operations
Huda Barakat--Nurse
Jeslyn Koh--MHPSS Program Manager
Jonathan Su--Director of Projects
Jwan Salim--Social Worker
Kaizak Sarkis--Office Manager
Nawaf Khudeda--Center Operations Manager
Nazdar Khudida--Dental Assistant
Rehan Dakhil--Education Program Officer
Ruth Wei--MHPSS Program Manager
Saad Shivan--Education Program Officer
Tahseen Alo--Education Program Officer
Thiyab Ghanim--Education Program Officer
Willy Tan--Country Director
Zeena Ali--Representative

Community Center Construction

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Salim Ali--Site Manager
Hawas Khalil--Assistant Site Manager
Peter Hasdell (Insitu Project)--Lead Architect
Chelsea Chan (ABCD Collaborative)--Lead Architect
Davide Frasca (Vide Terra)--SuperAdobe Consultant
Catalytic Action--Playspace Consultant and Architect

A special thank-you to each and every one of our supporters. None of this would be possible without your generosity.

If you would like to continue supporting us, scan the QR code or go to <https://habibi-international.org/give/>



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I N T E R N A T I O N A L