Courtesy of USAID Partner

Providing Healthcare for Displaced Persons in Libya

Armed conflict, civil unrest, and political instability flared in Libya in 2011, adversely affecting an estimated 2.4 million people and internally displacing more than 503,300 people.

The fighting was particularly fierce in northern Libya's Tawergha town, where Sarah* lived with her husband and eight children. When hostilities broke out in the town, Sarah's family fled to Libya's capital city of Tripoli before moving to Benghazi District in 2012. The family rented a house in Benghazi, but financial constraints soon forced them to move to a school where internally displaced persons (IDPs) were sheltering.

The daily challenges resulting from displacement were complicated by severe health concerns. While in Benghazi, one of Sarah's sons began suffering seizures and paralysis of one side of his body caused by previously undiagnosed human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and hepatitis B virus. After Sarah's family moved to an IDP camp in 2017, Sarah's daughter began showing signs of psychological distress. Soon, the cost of medications and treatments consumed nearly 50 percent of Sarah's family's income.

With support from USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA), a non-governmental organization in the IDP camp was able to provide no-cost medical assistance to Sarah's son. The USAID/OFDA partner also diagnosed Sarah's daughter with depression and began providing her with regular treatment and psychosocial support services. With access to free health care, the family's available income to meet other household needs nearly doubled.

"Although [the partner's] intervention may appear unnoticeable to others, for me it is the world. For a mother like me, it is very heartbreaking to see my son and daughter suffering, and I worked day and night to support my family. Now our health needs are covered and I have started to save some money. I really feel relieved," Sarah stated.

In Fiscal Year 2018, the USAID/OFDA partner reached more than 40,000 people with primary health care services in more than 20 IDP camps throughout Libya.

*Names have been changed to protect the identity of individuals in this story.