Health Care for Her Baby, Thanks to You

Maria and Carlos fled Venezuela with their little boy when lack of food and medicine put their health at risk.

Maria and her family had camped for months at a construction site after fleeing Venezuela with nothing. That’s when her baby became ill.

Little Dominic had diarrhea, which can be life threatening in a child if left untreated. Without money or citizenship in Colombia, Maria had no options. Then, another Venezuelan refugee told Maria about an Americares free clinic nearby. She and her husband rushed Dominic to the clinic, where Americares doctors treated the little boy. Within weeks, he was fully recovered.

Over the past five years, 4.8 million people have fled Venezuela, with Colombia hosting nearly 1.6 million displaced Venezuelans—the most in the region. Like many, Maria and her husband, Carlos, had a good life in Venezuela; they were both working while studying for college degrees. But the political crisis made currency worthless, and what had bought groceries for a month was gone in a day. Carlos left first and found a construction job in Colombia; Maria and Dominic followed.

“Thank you, Americares,” says Maria. “I’m very grateful. Not just for me, but for everyone who is coming. Many people arrive sick, because in Venezuela you can’t get medicine.”

Americares opened its first clinic in July 2018 and now operates 10 health clinics in Colombia for families like Maria’s. Americares clinics provide comprehensive primary care, including medical exams, mental health services and medication, at no cost for Venezuelan children and adults. Clinical staff also provide mobile outreach services in neighboring communities. Americares has provided nearly 177,000 patient consultations—close to 20 percent of clinic visits are pregnant women seeking pre-natal care, including many women with high-risk pregnancies.

The clinic that restored Dominic’s health is now the family’s primary health center—Americares staff even provided the paperwork Dominic needed to enroll in school in Colombia. Now, Maria sees a healthy future for her little boy, and that, at least, gives her hope.

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, Americares is supporting health workers, providing protective equipment and sharing educational materials with local health centers and the public.

“Our main concern is increasing the capacity of health centers in under-resourced communities to respond to the pandemic,” says Americares Vice President of Emergency Programs, Kate Dischino. Our focus is to:

Equip health workers: Americares is providing personal protective equipment for health workers on the frontlines of the outbreak. This includes isolation kits that contain masks, gloves, gowns and other supplies. “These isolation kits are phenomenal!” says Lynn Scott, director of medical services at the Capital City Rescue Mission Free Clinic in Albany, N.Y., which provides no-cost medical care to more than 2,200 mostly homeless and uninsured patients a year. “We had no gowns, were getting low on gloves and had not been able to get masks. The kits are providing the opportunity to stay open and provide care.”

Support health centers: To keep health centers functioning, Americares is providing coronavirus-specific emergency planning tools, mentoring and training.

Educate partners, patients and the public: To help maintain physical and mental health, Americares is sharing public health and safety information with partners and the public, including our community of committed donors and supporters, through live webinars, including question-and-answer sessions and downloadable information on our website.

Find the latest here: americares.org/coronavirus

See our videos and webinars here: americares.org/live

At an Americares clinic in Colombia, Maria found quality health care for her son.
Dear Friends,

During my first week as incoming CEO of Americares in mid-March, Connecticut's governor closed schools and nonessential businesses to stem the spread of the coronavirus. Americares immediately began making the changes necessary to maintain staff safety while responding to a worldwide pandemic.

To keep shipments of medicine and medical supplies moving from our distribution center, Americares revised our safety procedures and created a new schedule to reduce the number of staff on-site at any time. Our own frontline health workers—including those in the Bahamas, Colombia, India, El Salvador and here in the U.S.—continued to treat patients as long as they were able, abiding by national and local guidelines. Where possible, medical staff used telemedicine.

I have been asked multiple times how difficult it must be to be incoming CEO during this challenging time, and I feel just the opposite. When crises strike, strong teams become stronger. And at Americares, flexibility is in our DNA: We adapt to some of the most challenging circumstances and still make a big difference, saving lives and improving health. I have never been prouder.

I am equally impressed with the compassion and commitment of supporters like you. Health has never been more important than during this unprecedented pandemic and I, along with Americares global staff, am grateful for your ongoing support.

Thank you, and good health to you and your family.

Sincerely,

Christine Squires

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Javed is a tailor in Rafiq Nagar, one of Mumbai's largest slums. But his neighbors know him best as an Americares health promoter, one who shares information about healthy habits and disease prevention and alerts his community to the arrival of Americares mobile health center, a van that delivers free health care.

Javed volunteers as a health promoter because he knows how quality health care can change a life. His mother was ill for years because of diabetes. She'd been seeing a doctor, but only after she began visiting Americares mobile health center did her health improve. Americares medical staff helped her better understand diabetes, and she now manages the disease by taking her medication, eating healthful foods and, in her 80s, walking over a mile a day.

Rafiq Nagar is one of 133 slum locations Americares eight mobile health centers visit each month. (Note: By late March, the coronavirus pandemic had interrupted service). Last year, 84,000 patients received care at the health centers, and more than 70,000 people received health education from health educators and promoters like Javed. In 76 schools in Mumbai, 20,000 students a year learn the basics of health and hygiene in Americares programs and take those lessons home to their families.

Americares mobile health centers are dependable, arriving in 133 communities every two weeks.

In Mumbai’s slums, Javed volunteers as an Americares health promoter, directing his community to good health information and Americares mobile health center.

Javed promotes health and hygiene throughout Rafiq Nagar, one of Mumbai’s many slum communities.

Slum communities offer low-cost housing, but the environment puts people at risk for disease, and quality health care in Mumbai is often too expensive or difficult for the working poor to access. That’s why Javed gladly volunteers his time: It’s an expression of his hope and love for the people of Rafiq Nagar, his home.
There’s a little revolution in health care happening in the mountains of El Salvador, where poverty, rough roads and lack of transportation keep many people from the care they need.

With critical support from Astellas Pharma, Americares family clinic, La Clínica Integral de Atención Familiar, in remote Usulután, is expanding how the lowest-income Salvadorans access health services.

The clinic provides primary and specialty care, a pharmacy and community health education on topics such as nutrition and exercise. For the ultra-poor, the clinic provides a unique poverty access fund and, for remote communities, outreach teams that bring health services to patients where they live.

Astellas Pharma and Astellas Global Health Foundation’s partnership with Americares began a decade ago. Astellas USA Foundation is the legacy philanthropic entity of AGHF. Its support for Americares U.S., Medical Outreach and Emergency Programs includes the Americares Hurricane Dorian response; Astellas Pharma’s support includes the 10 Americares clinics providing health services for Venezuelan refugees in Colombia.

Headquartered in Japan, Astellas is a research-based global pharmaceutical company committed to advancing innovative medical solutions for patients, particularly in key focus areas, including oncology, immunology, cardiology, urology and neuroscience, while also advancing new areas such as cell and gene therapy, ophthalmology and muscle diseases.

“Astellas works to advance access to health by engaging in initiatives in areas where improvements are needed,” says Percival Barretto-Ko, president, Astellas Pharma U.S., and a member of the Americares board of directors. “Americares is an important partner in that effort.”

Help After a Hurricane

“No one will know what it was like,” a 13-year-old Hurricane Dorian survivor told Americares mental health staff at a shelter in the Bahamas. “They will think I am lying.”

The boy was worried that no one would understand what he had experienced during the hurricane. Then, his father had placed the family’s cash savings in a backpack, while a close cousin and her family had packed into a car to escape the wind, rain and 20-foot storm surge. The boy had watched his father be swept away and drown and was on the phone with his cousin when the line went silent, the family lost to the treacherous waters.

The Americares counselor sat with the boy and offered support. “How can we work together to find some relief for you?” the counselor asked.

After Hurricane Dorian battered the Bahamas, Americares sent mental health counselors with our mobile medical teams to the hardest-hit communities. In the first six months after the storm, Americares medical teams provided 4,200 medical consultations and 2,500 mental health consultations for survivors in need.
Your Donations at Work—During Emergencies and Every Day

With your help, between December 1, 2019, and February 29, 2020, Americares provided project support, medicine and medical supplies to the following countries and U.S. territories:

Afghanistan  Cambodia  Ethiopia  Ivory Coast  Madagascar  Nicaragua  Peru  St. Lucia  Uganda
Armenia  Cameroon  Ghana  Jamaica  Malawi  Nigeria  Philippines  St. Vincent  United States
Bahamas  Colombia  Greece  Jordan  Marshall Islands  Pakistan  Puerto Rico  Island
Bangladesh  Congo (Kinshasa)  Grenada  Kenya  Kyrgyzstan  Palestinian Territories  Rwanda  Sudan
Belarus  Dominica  Guatemala  Laos  Myanmar  Panama  Samoa  Syria
Belize  Dominican Republic  Guyana  Lebanon  Namibia  Papua New Guinea  Senegal  Tanzania
Benin  Ecuador  Haiti  Liberia  Nepal  Somalia  Sierra Leone  Thailand
Bolivia  Egypt  Honduras  India  Libya  South Africa  Togo
Brazil  El Salvador

Americares Emergency Response Partners

These organizations support Americares year-round readiness for global emergencies.

Alexion  AmerisourceBergen Foundation  FCA Foundation  Horizon Therapeutics
AmerisourceBergen Foundation  Anthem Foundation  Integra Foundation  Odyssey Group Foundation
Anthem Foundation  Bose  Medtronic  Patagonia
Bose  Chevron  Northrop Grumman  Southwest Airlines
Chevron  FCA Foundation  Novartis  Teleflex Foundation
Congo (Kinshasa)  Horizon Therapeutics  Novartis  Dean and Denise Vanech

When multiple earthquakes shook and shattered Puerto Rico beginning in December 2019, Americares provided 32 shipments of medicine and medical supplies, as well as mental health support for survivors.

By mid-March, Americares had provided 6 tons of protective supplies for health workers at the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Americares Free Clinics staff in Stamford, Conn., turned to telemedicine, appointments by telephone, to keep patients and staff safe from coronavirus infection in mid-March.

After Volcano Taal erupted in January 2020, more than 138,000 people fled the smothering ash fall. Americares provided aid to more than 3,000 families, including mental health activities for children in shelters.

Americares is a health-focused relief and development organization that responds to people affected by poverty or disaster with life-changing health programs, medicine and medical supplies.