

# Endless Medical Advantage

## Annual Impact Report

2021/2022



# About Endless Medical Advantage (EMA)

Lebanon currently hosts approximately 1.5 million Syrian refugees, the highest number of refugees per capita in the world. Many have little or no access to affordable healthcare and are living in some of the most remote and isolated areas of the Bekaa valley. To provide direct access, affordability and quality patient care, the idea of a mobile primary healthcare service was developed and **Endless Medical Advantage was born**, fondly referred to as EMA by the local communities and international friends who have been a key area of support since the initiative was established.

Our **mission** is to support Syrian and Lebanese medical professionals in providing sustainable healthcare services and humanitarian relief to refugees and vulnerable communities in Lebanon. Our initiative is a key source of healthcare for this community. **For thousands of families**, we are the only way for them to access free / subsidised healthcare given by community-based medical professionals.

We give **hope** to people devastated by crisis, disaster and displacement. **Together with the communities** we serve, we contribute to health and well-being by providing the best care to every patient. We implement integrated clinical practice with the main activities run through primary healthcare mobile clinics, and fight for sustainable improvements in healthcare in Lebanon to build a better future.





**With YOUR generous support, in the last 12 months, we treated approximately 25,000 patients in the mobile clinics, over 10,000 in the dental clinic and supported an additional 1,800 individuals with medical financial assistance, aid and relief, livelihood and food support.**



# Where does EMA Operate?

EMA operates in Central and West Bekaa, Lebanon, primarily in the towns of Marj and Saadnayel. Both areas are home to Lebanese families and Syrian refugees. Only 20% of refugees in this area reside in housing, meaning 80% live in Informal Tented Settlements, which they pay rent to stay in. More than 80% of families in Marj and Saadnayel live well below the extreme poverty line, and it is the second most impoverished region in the whole country. The social, economical and health crises have all happened at the same time which have made our work desperately needed over the past year.

Lebanon's economy has been in freefall since 2019 and its currency has lost more than 90% of its value, driving much of the nation into poverty and pushing healthcare professionals and other skilled workers to head abroad for work. This has left a heavy population of people in need of the most basic services that are no longer easily accessible.

Refugees in informal settlements rely on the limited amount of water brought in through water-trucking, an expensive method that compromises their dignity. Absence of permanent solutions to access to water and sanitation structures, means less ability for families to uphold standard health practices such as hand washing or teeth brushing, increasing refugees' risk of exposure to infectious and preventable diseases as well as other health issues.

Lebanon's highly privatised healthcare system means that healthcare is expensive and inaccessible to a large proportion of the population, with the majority of even local Lebanese not having expensive health insurance. Despite the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health's efforts to support and increase availability of primary and secondary healthcare for refugees, the cost of consultations, laboratory tests, and medication remains a significant barrier. Unemployed people simply cannot afford the bills of basic healthcare.



These challenges have identified drastic gaps in a healthcare system that EMA aims to fill. As the only refugee led healthcare provider, we are well positioned to directly respond to the most urgent and emerging needs of the refugee communities. Many refugees live in isolated settlements therefore even in the chance that they could afford health care, they cannot get there.

This is why our vans are mobile and bring healthcare to them. EMA operates in the wider health ecosystem that is on the brink of collapse however we are overly aware of the growing health needs as we are seeing more than double the number of patients visiting our daily clinic and approximately 40% of our beneficiaries are now coming from the vulnerable host community whereas this was around 5% of our patient intake over a year ago.

# Our Goals

To create **sustainable, community led infrastructure** by sharing skills and materials to refugees to reduce the health crisis in Lebanon and help save lives. We do this by creating physical clinics ran by refugees, providing long term sustainable healthcare solutions for all.

To **improve the quality of life** with provision of health services that are the most needed in the community, aiming to **fill the essential gaps** left by the host country and larger NGOs

To **lead the example** of how community and refugee led organisations with limited or no resources can make a systemic change by developing partnerships with NGOs to share resources.

To **improve the provision of dental healthcare** for the most vulnerable in Lebanon.

To **improve the provision of healthcare for people with disabilities** and increase their awareness **and knowledge in managing such conditions.**

To support **advocacy** for refugees in particular to healthcare and represent a much needed voice for the people.

To manage **prevention and control of epidemic outbreaks** through all our healthcare activities and education



# Mobile Clinics

We have equipped one big van and one smaller van to be **fully operational mobile medical clinics**.

We drive to **40** settlements each month, reaching up to **60,000** individuals, many of whom are children. Our clinic is led and supported by **refugee doctors** and nurses who support both the hosted and host communities with primary healthcare.



# Dental Service



In the last year, EMA has implemented an affordable and subsidised dental service to provide **access to high-quality dental health** care to vulnerable and refugee communities. Our resident dentist is a Syrian refugee and a skilled dentist.

The EMA dental clinic was founded due to the serious need for emergency dental treatment for the refugees in Lebanon with **100% of the community in need** of dental services: a gap we identified during our daily mobile primary health activities. The clinic is staffed by fully licensed and qualified local dentists and dental staff.

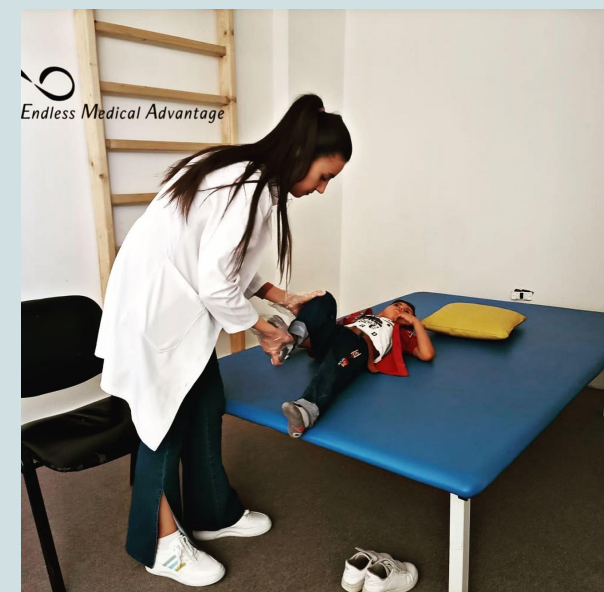
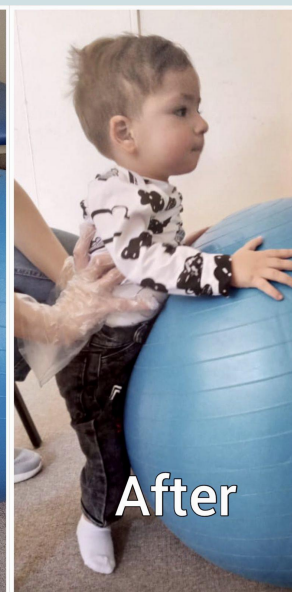
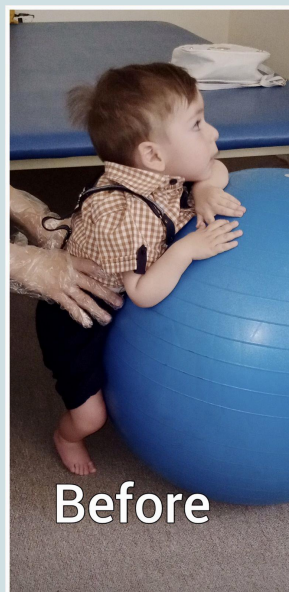


# Physiotherapy Programme

**240** patients supported with multiple physiotherapy sessions during the pilot Physiotherapy project - **750** sessions since the project started in Feb 2021!

EMA has similarly run a pilot programme to provide essential physiotherapy services to refugee communities living with disabilities. According to a study by Humanity & Inclusion, **22.8% of Syrian refugees** have disabilities. It means that more than **1 in 5 refugees has a disability**. Furthermore, **61.4%** of the households have at least one member with disabilities.

EMA has developed a strategic response to strengthen disability inclusion through our provision of free physiotherapy sessions, and popular skills training sessions to empower families to meet their own needs.





# Public Health Education & Awareness

1,100 participants took part in the health education sessions with 100% of participants eager to join future sessions on new and important topics!

Health education and awareness is equally as important as clinical care within primary health. We believe **prevention** is key to improving health outcomes, especially for vulnerable communities living in poor conditions.

We have developed several short health promotion and awareness sessions that allow our communities to benefit from the knowledge and experience of our health professionals (both local and international) particularly during a time when **education is severely lacking** within the refugee communities. In-demand topics we have covered this year include: Women's health, Pregnancy, Menstruation, Sexual health and First Aid.



## Individual Aid & Relief



Around **400** individual medical cases were supported in the last 12 months with financial assistance for their medical bills (a combination of full and partial payments) for treatments such as **chemotherapy, kidney dialysis, surgery, MRI, biopsies, Emergency and ICU admission** and more.



With the economic crisis in Lebanon reaching an all time low in early 2022, disposable income has been harder to come by. **Unemployment** has reached an all time high along with increasing levels of **poverty** and **food security**. Through our fundraising, we allocated some funds to support provide food packs during Ramadan, financial assistance for medical bills and livelihood support in the way of rent for individuals, assessed on a case by case basis.

## Covid-19 Misinformation & Rumour Tracking

**140 group sessions** completed - a combination of **listening groups, focus group discussions and Covid-19 awareness sessions**. In total, over **1,500 participants** have been involved in these activities since March 2022!



In Feb 2022, EMA became a partner in the **Rooted in Trust (RiT)** project, a **USAid funded project** run by **Internews**. RiT was initiated to support humanitarian and public health agencies to combat and manage the spread of rumors and misinformation about COVID-19 from predominantly the Syrian refugee communities living in the Bekaa valley and vulnerable Lebanese communities in neighboring areas.

Over the past year, EMA have conducted several activities in an effort to contribute to the fulfilment of the global project in order to **strengthen national-level responses to the “infodemic”** and COVID-19 vaccine distribution in Lebanon for communities also experiencing existing humanitarian crises.

# Oct 2021 / Oct 2022 in numbers!

**Total number of estimated direct and indirect beneficiaries: 45,000**

Number of patients treated in mobile clinics: **25,200**

Number of patients treated in the dental clinic: **10,000**

Number of families supported with food relief: **1,200**

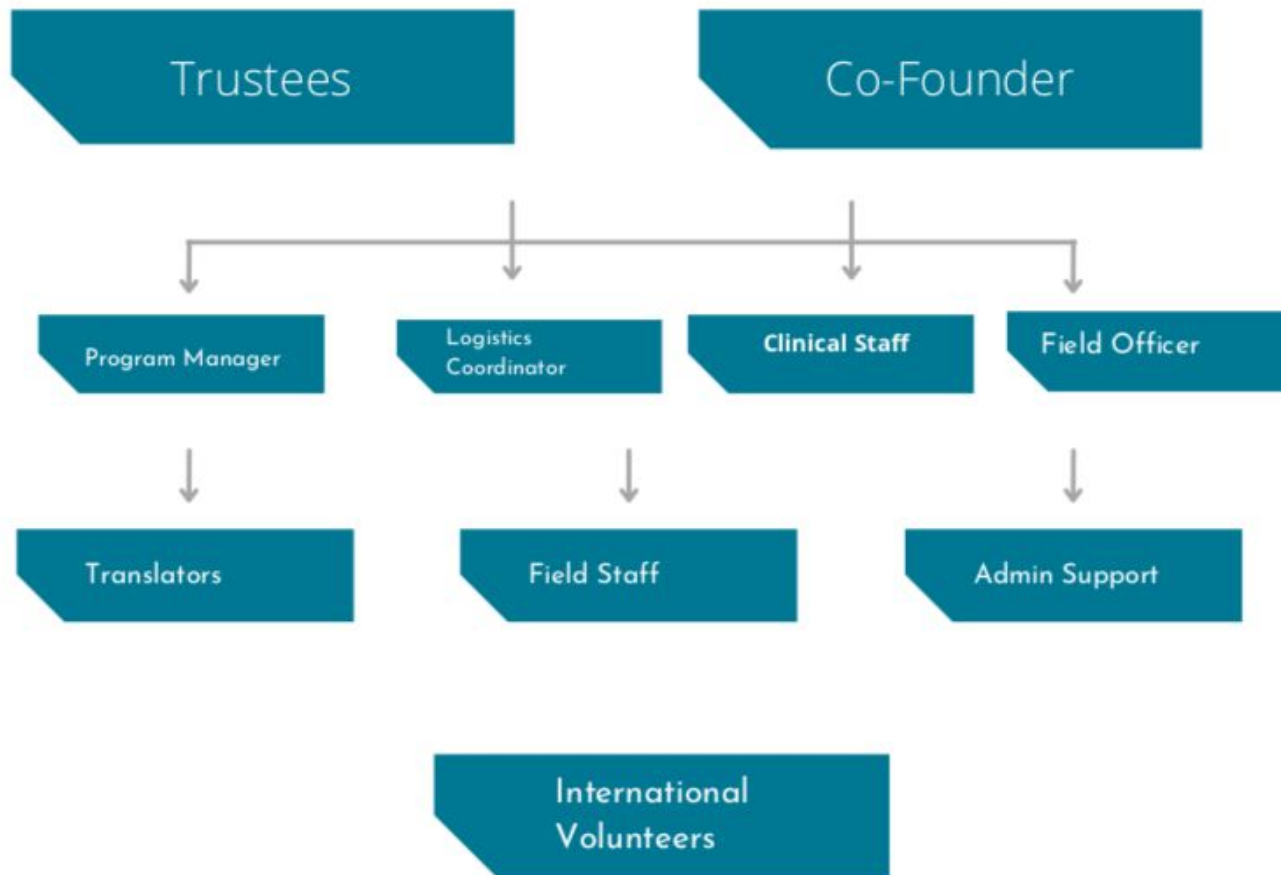
Number of individual medical cases supported: **400**

Number of participants involved in health education and awareness: **1,100**

Number of families benefited from livelihood support: **200**



# Structure



# The EMA Family

We are the only refugee-led healthcare provider across Bekaa, and our ethos is embedded in a bottom up approach, empowering local health professionals from the refugee community to support capacity building and shape a long-term sustainable healthcare infrastructure for a population that is otherwise unsupported. Our co-founder is a Syrian refugee and the rest of the team on the ground is comprised of healthcare professionals and humanitarian workers with lived experience from the communities we aim to serve. The primary health clinic is further supported by international medical volunteers to support with additional capacity, allowing for a greater volume of patients to be seen and treated on a daily basis.

Along with our incredible core team from the local communities who keep our activities running come rain, sun or snow, we also have a steady stream of international medical volunteers comprised of Doctors, Nurses & Medical students who join us on the ground throughout the year to assist with clinical activities, health education and organisational support.

They dedicate their time, bringing with them their own skills, experiences and knowledge to share with the EMA community, helping us to impact and improve the lives of thousands of individuals.



# Partnerships and Collaborations

Our partners, both international and local, make it possible for us to develop, offer more services, reach more individuals from both the host and refugee communities, and have a much wider impact overall.



# Donors & Finances

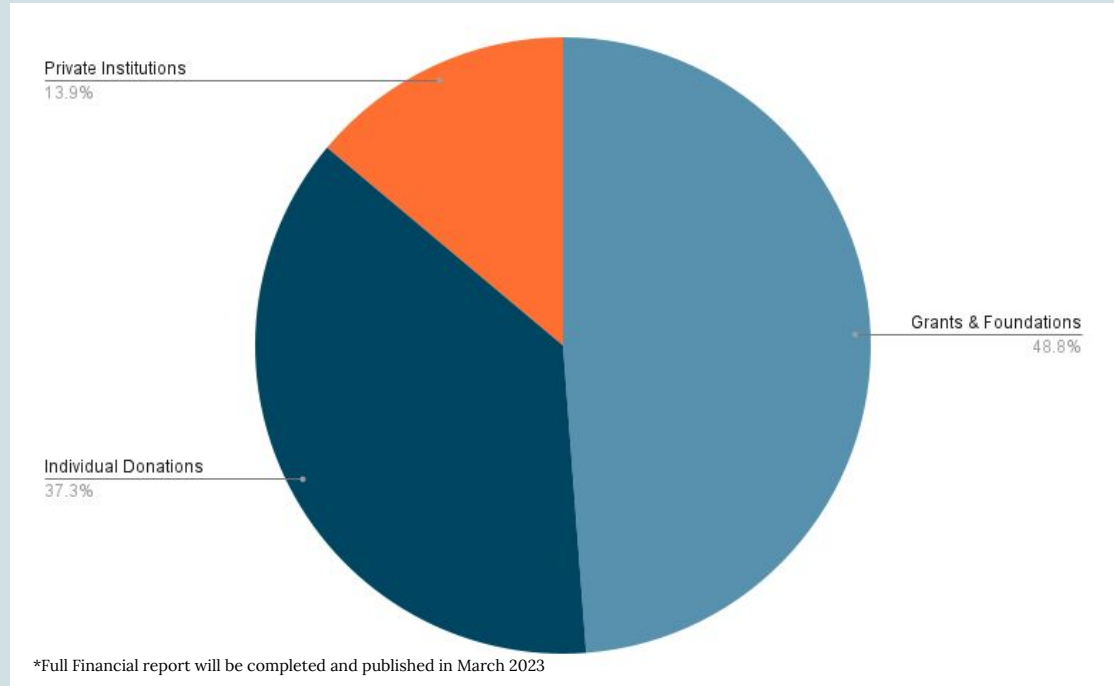


YOUR donations and support have made our work possible and is changing the face of refugee healthcare in Lebanon.

Thanks to your support, we have established a strong financial position to achieve our goals and impact the lives of thousands of people over the last year.

Every donation received is spent entirely on direct programme services, including salaries, medications, mobile unit running costs, medical supplies and all operational costs.

The generous support of our donors, sponsors, partners and friends all over the world has allowed us to expand our services to more communities and make fill the most essential health gaps to vulnerable refugee families as well as those from the host Lebanese communities.





# Successes and Challenges

## Our Key Successes:

- Sustainable healthcare and follow up to thousands of individuals, decreasing infectious disease outbreaks.
- Stronger and fluid referral mechanisms for secondary health.
- Primary healthcare services accessible and affordable for larger poverty stricken communities across the Bekaa.



## Biggest Challenges:

- Increased cost in hospital admissions, medical consultations and medications, increased price of fuel.
- Higher % of outbreak of epidemic diseases
- Poorer WASH conditions
- Socio economic climate in Lebanon in continuous decline
- Collapse of the bank with Lebanon on the brink of bankruptcy
- Political corruption and instability
- Less funding support for NGOs and INGOs to support refugee communities leading to lack of clean water, health supplies and interventions.
- All combined have led to poorer public health outcomes and larger health needs in the wider population.



# The EMA Community

Here's what some of our patients have to say about our work



"I was diagnosed with cancer earlier this year and I after seeing the specialists, I needed chemotherapy. The cost in Lebanon is now crazy. I was told all the sessions will cost more than \$5000 and maybe more. I didn't think I would be able to find way to pay for this and I was scared I would die. Dr Feras and EMA have helped me with my medical bills and treatments for the last few months. They have also recommended other local organisations who may be able to help with the rest of the bills. With their support, I have been able to take regular chemotherapy treatment and I have a chance to live. I am so grateful for the EMA team who have saved my life."

"I didn't think my son would ever walk. My son has a physical disability affecting his legs and there have not been any services available to help him regain some strength in his legs. We were referred to Dr Lina by EMA team earlier this year and after the first assessment she made a treatment plan. I take him for regular sessions and the improvement in his legs in a miracle for me. Dr Lina has helped him to build strength in his legs, walk and even run. We practise his exercise she gave us at home and we are continuing with the physiotherapy sessions. I am so thankful to Dr Lina and Dr Feras for giving us this help. My son can enjoy his childhood and I can imagine a better future for him"



## Looking Ahead to 2023 and Beyond!

As we look forward, our goals remain intact and for the future of our activities and our organisation, we plan to build capacity within the team and our operations with the aim of changing the face of healthcare for refugees in Lebanon. We plan to continue learning from our work, and maintain a bottom up approach to ensure all our work is community led and community driven.

We aim to achieve the following:

**Expand the number of mobile medical units (MMUs)**

**Expand to more areas across the region - currently we cover 13% of informal settlements across Central and West Bekaa**

**Develop our pilot physiotherapy programme with both short term and long term interventions for those with severe physical disabilities**

**Enable fully subsidised dental treatments for all patients, not just emergencies**

**Produce a comprehensive health education programme for refugee communities living in informal settlements as well as local schools in our target areas. Topics will include: Dental hygiene, Infectious disease prevention, Pregnancy, Breastfeeding and would be mothers, Female hygiene, First aid, Nursing skills and Lifestyle & nutrition**



# October 2021 / October 2022 Endless Medical Advantage

Registered UK Charity Number 1194717

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