



# SAMS

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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# Message From the Foundation Chair

Dear Supporters,

2021 was a challenging year for all of us. We lost many dear friends and relatives, and faced a number of global crises that made our work more difficult. In the conflict zones served by SAMS Foundation, these crises were made even more extreme by the conditions inflicted by war: poverty, malnutrition and even the targeted destruction of civilian infrastructure essential for basic services. We also faced challenges related to financial and logistical difficulties imposed by the global supply chain disruption.

But the SAMS team rose to meet these challenges, delivering world class COVID treatment with four newly established COVID hospitals complete with 100 ICU beds and state of the art equipment like ventilators, monitors, and oxygen generators. By using innovative technologies, SAMS' physicians were able to share the knowledge they gained treating difficult COVID cases in the U.S. with their colleagues in Syria through online lectures and workshops as well as daily remote online rounds. Our 1,400 dedicated and selfless medical providers in Syria continued to risk their lives to help those in need. Our staff in the U.S. and around the world were able to come together and overcome the logistical and funding challenges through innovation and teamwork.

The end results are the amazing numbers you see in this report. Our team provided more than 2.3 million services, including 74,000 surgeries and life-saving procedures for 3,300 critically ill COVID-19 patients. In 2021, we continued to serve the displaced and needy in northern Syria and the refugees in the surrounding countries, treating their acute and chronic illnesses, accommodating disabilities, and addressing their medical education needs. We continued to expand our signature programs such as our cancer centers and midwifery schools, and improved the services and increased capacity at our one-of-a-kind autism center in Istanbul. With the help of our selfless volunteers, we were able to deliver these services in a cost effective manner with an average cost of less than \$15 per service.

We are grateful to our dedicated partners in the UN, governments, and international NGOs for their trust and support. And we are especially indebted to our private donors who continued to trust us with their charitable contributions despite the very difficult year.

We are looking forward to 2022 and continuing to help those in need everywhere. And we look forward to sharing more about the exciting new programs we have coming up soon, Inshallah.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Basel Termanini  
Foundation Chair



# Message From the President

To Our Members and Supporters,

COVID-19 presented challenges to all areas of SAMS' work in 2021, including challenges in meeting donors and partners as well as fundraising in the U.S. We also faced challenges in providing services in Syria due to the dramatic effects of the pandemic. As we come out of this arduous period with the full support of our members, SAMS is in a stronger position for 2022.

Our greatest asset are our hundreds of members who bring their expertise and excellence in all realms of the medical profession. Over the past two years, we utilized this experience in a new way, connecting our doctors virtually with patients, trainees, and healthcare providers in the field. This transition was a success, and we can now continue utilizing the knowledge gained as we return to in-person interventions from our members and volunteers. For instance, we are thrilled that as we entered 2022, we successfully resumed our international medical missions to Jordan and Lebanon.

SAMS, in partnership with our members, has accomplished a lot despite the challenges of the pandemic, but one of our strengths has been the ability to adapt and change along with the conflict and the donor environment. We are entering a new phase in Syria, one in which the primary needs of our beneficiaries are no longer dominated by war injuries, but by the need for longer-term, sustainable medical care. And this is why SAMS is developing new focus areas in medical education, mental health, and psycho-social services. Not only does SAMS have the staff and capacity to manage this transition, we also have you, our members, who possess immense relevant expertise and an unending supply of generosity for those in need. We know we have asked a lot of you over the years, and we will keep asking as long as the people of Syria are suffering.

Accountability and access remain profound challenges to the successful provision of humanitarian and medical aid. While both of these processes are still far from resolved, SAMS has pushed relentlessly both at the UN and with government partners to explore avenues for further accountability and expanded cross-border access. Commitment to these goals remains a key part of our work for 2022.

Please accept our sincere thanks, whether you have donated money, participated in a field visit, offered online training sessions or any other contribution, we truly couldn't do it without you. Many of you were directly involved in providing SAMS' services in the field, and even more of you made sure our 10th National Conference (September 3-5, 2021) and second International Symposium (July 23, 2021) were vital learning experiences for all who attended, virtually or in person. We will ask even more of you in 2022 because we know you want to help and that we couldn't do it without you. Thanks again for all your efforts.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Amjad Rass  
President



## REBUILDING LIVES. RESTORING HEALTH.

The Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) was founded in 1998 as a professional society to provide networking and educational opportunities to medical professionals of Syrian descent across the United States. The charitable arm of SAMS, SAMS Foundation, was launched in 2007. With the eruption of the conflict in Syria, SAMS Foundation has become one of the most active medical relief organizations working on the frontlines of crisis relief in Syria, neighboring countries, and beyond.

### OUR MISSION...

is dedicated to delivering life-saving services, revitalizing health systems during crisis, and promoting medical education via a network of humanitarians in Syria, the US, and beyond.

### OUR VISION...

is to strengthen the future of Syria's healthcare, delivering dignified medical relief where needed, fortified by a dedicated medical community.

## OUR CORE VALUES

### SERVING WITH COMPASSION

We serve those in need with compassion, kindness, and dignity, regardless of background or religious affiliations. Our purpose is to ensure that no one in need of medical care is left untreated in the face of crisis.

### ACTING NOW

We pursue excellence in care by acting promptly, effectively, and efficiently to respond to crises whether in Syria, in neighboring countries, in the US, or beyond.

### LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS

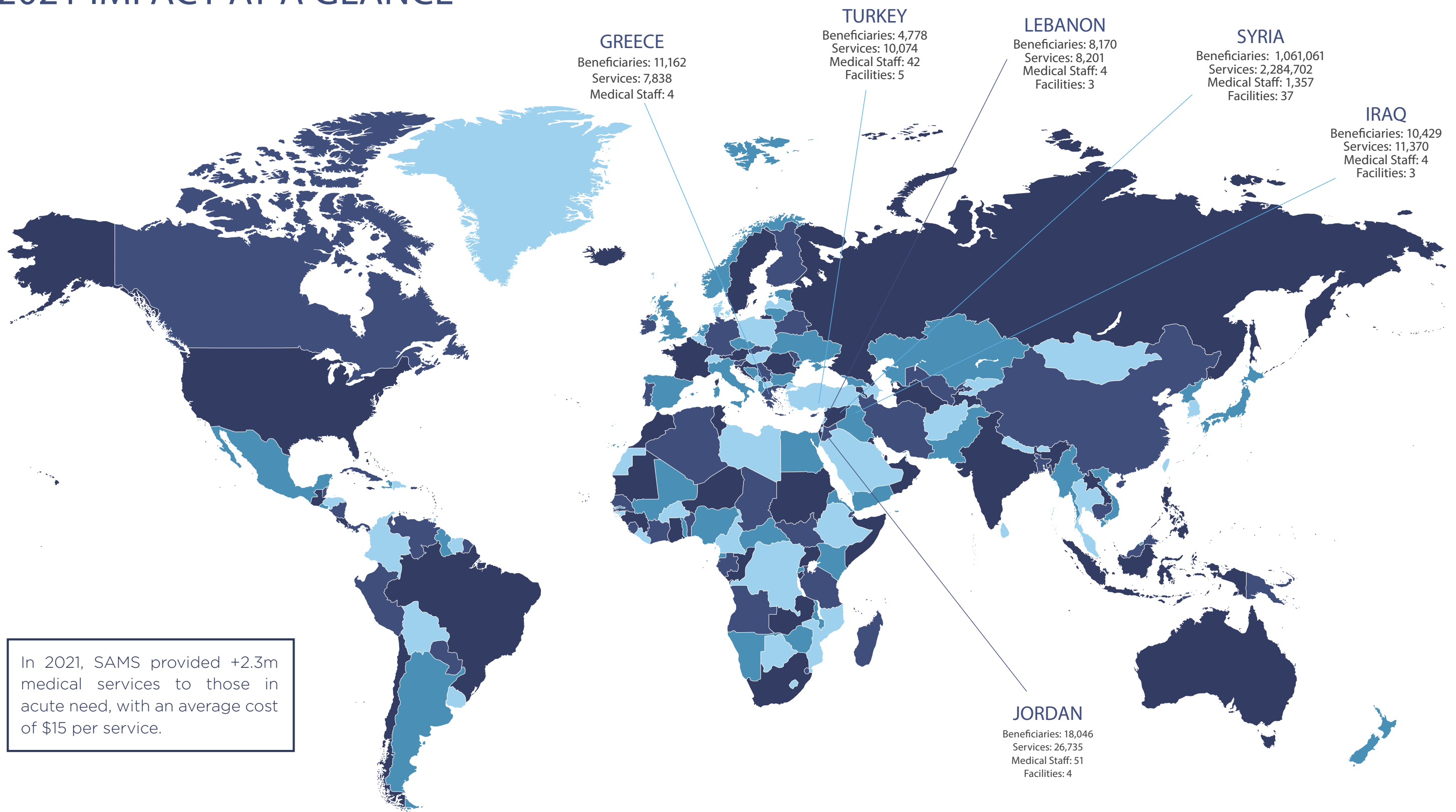
We believe in the power of partnering with other like-minded organizations to support our cause and best serve populations in need. We leverage partnerships for sustainable and long-lasting impact to ensure that the most vulnerable are able to access dignified care.

### MOBILIZING

We face challenges head-on thanks to our extensive network of members and medical professionals in the U.S. and abroad. We work together to come up with innovative solutions to effectively deliver medical services to those caught in conflict, and to advocate in support of their needs before the international community.



# 2021 IMPACT AT A GLANCE



In 2021, SAMS provided +2.3m medical services to those in acute need, with an average cost of \$15 per service.

2.3 Mil  
MEDICAL SERVICES

1.1 Mil  
BENEFICIARIES

74,831  
SURGERIES IN SYRIA

53  
FACILITIES

1,462  
MEDICAL WORKERS

22,717  
DELIVERIES IN SYRIA

3,394  
COVID-19 PATIENTS TREATED



## MEDICAL RELIEF WORK: SYRIA

In Syria, at least 13.4 million people need humanitarian assistance, including 6.7 million internally displaced people. These displaced communities have limited access to basic life necessities and healthcare. SAMS is one of the most trusted NGOs on the ground in Syria, delivering urgently-needed medical care free of charge to people in need.

In 2021, SAMS facilities and projects served more than 1 million beneficiaries amid conflict and despite many challenges. The various healthcare activities included surgeries, deliveries, dialysis, laboratory and imaging tests, vaccination, mental and psychosocial support, and dental care, among many others. SAMS staff and volunteers provided more than 2.2 million services to one of the most vulnerable populations living in dire conditions.

SAMS supported 37 health facilities throughout 2021 and added a new facility in December to reach a total of 38 across 5 governorates in northern Syria. These SAMS-supported facilities included 12 hospitals, 15 primary health care centers (PHCs), 2 mobile clinics, 4 specialized COVID-19 hospitals, a COVID-19 isolation unit for children, 2 dialysis units, 3 mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) centers, 3 oncology and hematology centers, 4 physical rehabilitation centers, an ambulance system, and one midwifery and nursing school.



## Mental Health

SAMS has established robust mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) programs in Syria, where MHPSS teams provide different means of care and support for beneficiaries, including therapy for individuals struggling with conflict or violence-related trauma, anxiety, PTSD, and depression. In 2021, these programs provided 12,511 MHPSS services.

**80% of Syrian refugee children had suffered a family death, and 60% have endured physical attacks. More than half of all Syrian children have PTSD symptoms. (UNHCR)**



## MHPSS Center

SAMS supports an MHPSS center in Idlib governorate that provides telepsychiatric services for individuals with advanced mental health and neurological problems. The local team – which consists of two doctors trained in mhGAP, four psychologists, a psychiatric nurse, and a pharmacist – receives remote support from a roster of bilingual, western-trained psychiatrists. These professionals help SAMS local providers assess, diagnose, and manage patients through set clinic hours and an on-call schedule. Medication management is an essential part of this program, and the medications are given free of charge. This MHPSS center, along with other health facilities throughout the northwest managed by SAMS, also implements mental health assessment, psychosocial support, and training in mhGAP, as well as the establishment of a secure supply chain of psychiatric medications.

## Safe Spaces

SAMS manages eight safe spaces for women and girls, which provide them with psychosocial support, protection services, women’s empowerment training, and case management for those affected by gender-based violence (GBV). In two of these centers, psychiatrists work alongside the physiotherapy team to provide MHPSS support for survivors of explosive hazards incidents and other war-related injuries.

## CETA Training

Building sustainable mental health services is crucial to the process of supporting Syrian civilians. With close to half of all children showing symptoms of PTSD due to the constant state of conflict, it’s clear that to secure Syria’s future, the mental health of the youth must be a priority. This goal is impeded by a lack of available mental health professionals and lack of access to the most up-to-date practices. To mitigate this issue, SAMS partnered with experts from Johns Hopkins University’s Bloomberg School of Public Health to adapt a transdiagnostic intervention program called Common Elements Treatment Approach (CETA) for remote implementation in Syria. SAMS has translated and adapted the Child CETA curriculum into Arabic and recorded new, Arabic language training videos so the material can be presented in an engaging, culturally appropriate way. These materials will be used by bilingual CETA instructors to train women living in the governorates of Aleppo and Idlib to be mental health counselors. Once trained, these counselors will provide psychosocial support for children and adolescents within their communities.



## COVID-19 Response

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued into 2021, the Delta and Omicron variants presented new challenges and stretched the limits of the health system's ability to accommodate large numbers of patients and generate adequate supplies of oxygen. SAMS provided ongoing support to the four primary COVID-19 designated hospitals in northern Syria and remained a crucial member of the NWS COVID-19 Task Force, serving as a focal point for the case management group that led critical coordination efforts among health actors in NWS. SAMS also coordinated closely with the Risk Communication and Community Engagement pillar of the response to maintain best practices for COVID-19 case management.

With the health system stretched thin by ten years of conflict, SAMS utilized all available resources to maintain service capacity as the pandemic quickly tested the limits of the health system. Hospital-based isolation units (HBIUs) established by SAMS composed 52% of ICU beds and 39% of the overall bed capacity in NWS to treat COVID-19 patients in critical condition.

In addition to utilizing resources on the ground, SAMS conducted daily telemedicine rounds and consultations for COVID-19 patients in isolation hospitals with the help of SAMS Members. These consultations were provided by US-based SAMS Members and professionals to increase the local staff's ability to treat a larger number of COVID-19 patients, helped elevate the standard of care, and provided opportunities for Syrian health workers to receive on-the-job learning about COVID-19 best practices.



In August 2021, the Delta wave of COVID-19 surged in NWS, and more pediatric cases required hospitalization. SAMS created an isolation ward at the Avicenna Hospital in Idlib with 15 beds, including 3 ICU beds. Pediatric critical care specialists joined the telemedicine rounds team extending their expertise and support.

The COVID-19 vaccine arrived in NWS in 2021, and SAMS participated in the vaccination campaign, which began on May 1. Vaccination rates remained low during the initial campaign, so SAMS launched a campaign to encourage vaccination and provide accurate information about inoculation. Initially prioritizing health staff, SAMS conducted individual and group sessions to encourage vaccination and took administrative measures to improve vaccination rates among the staff. There is now an almost 100% vaccination rate among SAMS staff, protecting staff and patients alike. SAMS continues to educate the civilian population about the importance of vaccination.





SAMS also developed and implemented case management training for the majority of health workers in the isolation centers of NWS. SAMS Members and professionals led these trainings which included the development of COVID-19 hospital admission criteria, the management of complications and superimposed infections such as mucormycosis, as well as recommended infection prevention and control (IPC) measures. Additionally, SAMS IPC committees at each health facility continually monitored the implementation of IPC measures and offered technical assistance to hospital staff.

SAMS participated in strengthening the surveillance system in coordination with the Early Warning, Alert, and Response Network (EWARN), through training all SAMS facilities' staff on standard operating procedures (SOPs) for case detection and reporting. Furthermore, SAMS dedicated five ambulances equipped with ventilators and ensured they were staffed 24/7 to transfer suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases to the appropriate facilities.



## Specialty Programs

### Cancer Treatment

While conflict-related medical services are an essential need of Syria's health system, chronic conditions continue to impact the population and are often overlooked and under-resourced. Amid the ongoing conflict and displacement, cancer patients in Syria are more likely to be diagnosed when their disease has already reached an advanced stage, making treatment more difficult and reducing their chances of survival. SAMS is the only NGO on the ground in northern Syria offering a full range of cancer services and chemotherapy free of charge to patients in need at three specialized facilities: the Oncology Center in Idlib, an oncology unit in Al Bab Primary Health Center, and an oncology unit in Jarablus Primary Health Center.

In November 2021, SAMS launched a mammogram screening program at Idlib Central Hospital. This program expands the hospital's ability to detect breast cancer early in communities where access to cancer screening services is rare. Through this program, patients can access proper diagnostic imaging that increases early detection, improves prognosis, and saves lives.

In northern Syria, SAMS provides dignified, quality cancer care through more than 1,000 consultations per month, managing patients with colon cancer, Hodgkins and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, pediatric leukemia, and breast cancer, and bridging the gap in accessible cancer care for underserved populations.

#### Impact Story

The Oncology Center in Idlib continues to provide critical medical services to cancer patients in NW Syria. Yusra Al-Awada is a patient who struggled to find the proper treatment for breast cancer after being transferred to numerous hospitals across the region.

She finally received care at SAMS Oncology Center in Idlib after the arduous process of finding a facility that could help her. Doctors at the center confirmed the stage of her disease, planned the treatment course, and provided her with the medications and care she needed, free of charge. SAMS Oncology Center also arranges for selected cases to go to Turkey to receive advanced and specialized forms of treatments that are unavailable inside Syria but significantly improve the patients' outcomes.



### Dental Clinics

Amid conflict and displacement, dental care is a part of general health that often goes neglected. SAMS supported 15 dental clinics in 4 governorates last year. In 2021, SAMS-supported dental clinics offered dental care for 58,903 patients. The clinics' services include management of dental emergencies, oral infections, gum disease, cavity filling, and root canal therapy.

### Nephrology

SAMS supported two dialysis units for kidney disease patients: one in Bab Al Hawa Hospital in Idlib and one in Al Fardous Hospital in Aleppo. The two dialysis units provided medical care and treatment for 802 patients in 2021. Throughout 2021, these facilities also secured free medication for 114 patients with advanced kidney disease, providing them with a lifeline to managing chronic conditions at a time when medications for such illnesses are increasingly expensive and in short supply.

## SAMS Winterization Response

Winter presents an annual threat to the 2.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) of northern Syria. With generous support from its donors and supporters, SAMS partnered with local organizations to deliver lifesaving winterization assistance. The first intervention phase in 2021 was fuel distribution in 87 schools in 4 different districts Azzaz, Al-Bab, Jarablus, and Afrin, bringing warm school days to 31,850 students.

In addition, SAMS and local NGO partners complemented their winterization campaigns by implementing WASH interventions in selected IDP camps to reduce the risk of flooding. The project targeted 5 IDP camps in Idlib, excavating and applying gravel on the ground of the camp. This intervention leveled the tents and established a drainage system in the camps to decrease the risk of seasonal flooding for the 1,015 residents of the five camps.



## Attacks on Health

Attacks on health facilities have been a hallmark of the Syrian conflict. In 2021, SAMS recorded a total of 12 attacks on health facilities. On March 21st, 2021, the Al Atareb Hospital was targeted by missile attacks, killing six patients and injuring 17, including five medical staff. The hospital suspended its services following the attack from March 21st to March 26th, 2021. Patients were referred to the nearest health facilities with appropriate services; repairs started immediately, allowing the hospital to return to service within a week.

On June 12th, two missiles hit SAMS-supported Al-Shifaa Hospital in Afrin. The first missile hit the emergency room, and the second missile hit the labor and delivery room. As a result, the emergency room, delivery room, outpatient department (including MHPSS, safe space, and physiotherapy units), and the laboratory and radiology units were destroyed. Reports confirmed the death toll to be 15; of this number, 2 were hospital staff, and 2 were ambulance drivers. Eleven hospital staff were injured, including one midwife who was in critical condition at the time.

Al-Shifaa Hospital is one of the largest medical facilities in northern Syria, providing an average of 15,000 medical services each month, including 350 newborn deliveries and 250 specialized surgeries. SAMS started rebuilding the destroyed sections of Al Shifa Hospital and the hospital will become fully operational again in 2022.



# Jordan

Jordan remains one of the countries most impacted by the ongoing conflict in Syria. With over 672,000 registered Syrian refugees, and an estimated 700,000 more unregistered, needs in Jordan are high among both refugees and vulnerable Jordanian citizens. SAMS has been active in Jordan since 2012. Despite the numerous challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we continue to work with our partners to provide medical relief and mental health support to the vulnerable communities that we serve.

**In Jordan, SAMS reached a total of 18,046 unique beneficiaries in 2021, providing 26,735 medical and MHPSS services.**



## Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

With continued support from the Schooner Foundation, SAMS successfully provided mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and gender-based violence (GBV) outreach, awareness, and support response in central and northern Jordan for vulnerable Syrians and local communities. Overall, MHPSS activities served 16,577 beneficiaries in 2021. The provided services include individual therapy, medication management, and a series of group support sessions and psychoeducation workshops hosted at community centers. The workshops cover various topics such as emotion management, sleep problems, bullying, self-esteem, and communication skills.

Through these initiatives, SAMS builds strong and long-lasting relationships within the communities it serves, including local government offices and community-based organizations (CBOs). This year, SAMS conducted an assessment of training needs at the Jordanian Ministries of Health and Social Development and local CBOs, followed by a series of trainings on topics ranging from self care and ethics to psychological testing and clinical interviews. These trainings served to build capacity and improve the quality of community-based care and local providers.

In 2021, thanks to a partnership with InterAction, SAMS worked with Jordanian CBOs to develop and contextualize facilitation guides, policies, and tools for frontline staff related to adult and child safeguarding and survivor-assistance. These partnerships, as in years past, have remained critical in our efforts to increase and improve access to MHPSS and GBV support for refugees and the host communities in Jordan.





remotely or in person.

SAMS organized 80 Gender-Based Violence (GBV) awareness workshops for women, youth, and children, addressing topics such as physical and verbal violence, early marriage, sexual harassment and assault, and unbalanced power relationships. SAMS also participated in the campaign “16 Days of Activism Against GBV”. This is an annual international campaign that kicks off on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10 December, Human Rights Day, posting messages with the themes of GBV prevention as a moral imperative and GBV as an obstacle to equality, and conducting awareness sessions on signs of abuse, and responding sensitively to survivors to 80 university social work students.

## Partnership with Jordanian Universities

SAMS MHPSS program continued to offer internship experience to graduate students studying Counseling, Social Work, Psychology, and other related fields at major Jordanian universities like Yarmouk University and the University of Jordan. These interns attended orientation and training on conducting field visits, communication skills, and psychological work ethics before they were integrated into our Outreach Teams.



## Outreach Services

SAMS team of MHPSS specialists based in Amman and Irbid provided outreach and referral services in 5 geographical locations for refugees living outside the camps and their host communities. The services include in-home assessments of vulnerable households to determine the most critical needs related to mental health, general health, nutrition, education, and family violence. Individuals were then referred for essential services, including those offered within SAMS MHPSS centers. The team also referred beneficiaries for other needs such as protection and financial support and arranged for appropriate medical care, including interventions by SAMS organized medical missions. The outreach team visited 1,747 households in 2021.

## Combating Gender Based Violence (GBV)

SAMS’ Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) counselors and GBV specialists, in collaboration with local Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) hosted GBV activities in centers in Zarqa, Ramtha, Salt, Irbid, and Amman, utilizing their networks to educate on and improve access to GBV services among the most vulnerable. SAMS coordinated with local CBOs to identify vulnerable beneficiaries with whom to conduct in-home assessments and consent-based referrals as needed for GBV case management, counseling, and psychoeducation activities to improve knowledge around GBV, mental health services, and conflict resolution. Taking safety issues and principles of ‘do no harm’ into account, SAMS case managers evaluate if it is safer to offer counseling for the survivors

## SAMS Medical Center in Za’atari Refugee Camp

Since 2017, SAMS has offered dental services to Syrian refugees at its Zaatari Refugee camp medical center. In 2021, the center provided over 3,178 dental services free of charge 3 days a week, including routine dental services such as simple and surgical extractions, root canal treatments, and radiographs for treatment assessment and diagnosis. For some of the most complex cases, SAMS organized pediatric oral surgery missions. Activities for screening, prevention, and education were introduced to the outreach programs in the camp in 2021.

The center adopted infection control procedures, the use of protective equipment, appointment-based services, triaging, and social distance to ensure the protection of patients and providers. The dental team continues to offer desperately needed dental treatment despite the COVID-19 outbreaks.

SAMS imaging service in the medical facility is the only continuously running one in the camp in 2021. It produced over 4,500 images operating in two daily shifts—the regular and the nighttime shifts—six days a week. Additionally, the medical center added a new component to its ongoing work, holding 3 awareness sessions about oral hygiene for children to promote dental health and develop healthy habits.



## Wadi Al Seer Comprehensive Medical Center

In 2021, SAMS expanded its efforts to improve the mental and physical health of Amman residents through its Rehabilitation, Physiotherapy, and MHPSS Unit at Wadi Al Seer Comprehensive Medical Center.

According to recent studies, there is no integration of PT/OT and MHPSS into public primary and comprehensive health care facilities, and the prevalence of disability among Syrian refugees aged 2 years and older is estimated to be 22.9%. This project promotes access to comprehensive rehabilitation and MHPSS services for vulnerable refugee and host community populations and Ministry of Health (MoH) medical centers.

SAMS also aims to link rehabilitation services with MHPSS services by co-locating these services and creating a referral pathway between both, so patients can get the care they need when an injury or illness also impacts the patient's mental health.

During the clinic's establishment in October 2021, SAMS coordinated with Humanity and Inclusion (HI) to evaluate the center and provide the technical support needed. The MoH also supported arranging the space and assessing the equipment needed for the target population.

SAMS coordinated with UNHCR, HI, the MoH and local CBOs in Wadi Al Seer to create a comprehensive referral system for patients and arranged meetings with other CBOs to ensure we reached the largest number of patients possible.

The rehabilitation clinic provided services six days a week, including physical therapy and the distribution of assistive devices serving 205 beneficiaries. SAMS provides MHPSS services free of charge in a private room, including consultations for refugee and Jordanian PWD and non-PWD for one day a week. The psychologist provides individual treatment sessions for patients suffering from depression, PTSD, and anxiety, while more complex cases are referred to SAMS psychiatrists for medication management.

## Medical Missions Project

In 2021, SAMS continued our newly implemented program of internal medical missions in Jordan, where SAMS collaborates with local surgeons to provide life-changing care for refugees and local underserved populations. SAMS initiated this program in 2020 to continue providing high-impact services and fill the gap created when SAMS international missions were put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

SAMS worked with multiple local Jordanian surgeons and specialists in ophthalmology, pediatric otolaryngology (ENT), and pediatric urology. In total, SAMS organized 12 local medical missions providing 365 life-changing procedures such as cataract removal, corrective surgery for pediatric squint cases, tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy, and procedures for children suffering from undescended testes and hernias. The team in Jordan continued the retinopathy care program, providing screenings, follow-up care, and vision-saving Avastin injections and laser treatments for 47 patients suffering from retinal vascular abnormalities.



### Impact Story

“ I feel happy when I meet with the doctors and talk to them because at this difficult time, it’s hard to find good ones who listen and care, and I’m so glad that I have.”

This is how Mr. Ezzat, a retinopathy patient, described his experience with SAMS doctors and staff.

Due to the pandemic, SAMS’ international missions were postponed. However, in coordination with local hospitals, SAMS continued to provide care for those in need.

## Lebanon

Lebanon hosts over 1.5 million Syrian refugees. Throughout 2021, SAMS Lebanon and its local partners successfully organized and led two medical mission programs in Lebanon. Despite the restrictions and challenges presented by the COVID-19 Pandemic, SAMS was able to provide 8,201 medical services in Lebanon in 2021.



### Filling the Gap in Secondary Care

SAMS identified secondary health care as a major gap in access for vulnerable populations in Lebanon. In response to this gap, SAMS implemented a 13-month project in 2021 to cover life-saving hospital care for refugees and vulnerable Lebanese who could not otherwise afford such care. Because of the immense need among Syrian refugees and Lebanese in particular, the number of people provided with hospitalization support exceeded the initial target of 1,000. Ultimately, SAMS served 1,173 Syrian refugees under 18 years of age, 435 Lebanese patients who required admission for urgent care, and 96 Palestinians under 18 and over 60 years old who were otherwise unable to cover the full cost of cardiovascular interventions.

This project was supported by UN OCHA’s Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF), and addressed the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan’s objective of improving access to hospitals and advanced referral care. The project was implemented across Lebanon and provided financial support for vulnerable patients who are unable to cover the heavy costs of necessary hospitalization by facilitating a timely and safe referral to life-saving hospital services. The project also decreased protection concerns faced by beneficiaries during hospitalization and increased their sense of safety and well-being.

SAMS coordinated closely on this project with UN agencies (UNHCR and UNRWA) and the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health.

SAMS proposed and received support for another one-year LHF-funded project that started in August 2021. This project addressed the critical, life-saving needs of the most vulnerable Lebanese and migrant workers due to the pandemic and Lebanon's declining socioeconomic situation. SAMS provided financial top-up contributions to support the patient share, diagnostic care, and the non-covered medical costs to vulnerable Lebanese and migrant workers. Lebanese patients in need of psychiatric hospital admission were also supported by SAMS under this project. All activities were closely coordinated with key stakeholders within the health sector, and SAMS implemented a complementary activity by supporting five hospitals - one per governorate - with personal protective equipment (PPE).



## Medical Missions in Lebanon

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, SAMS international medical missions were temporarily paused. In response, SAMS organized medical missions utilizing local Lebanese surgeons that allowed us to continue to provide life-changing services.

In August and September, SAMS organized two ophthalmology missions, performing screenings and cataract removal surgeries free of charge for over 100 beneficiaries in Lebanon's northern governorates. The missions were conducted in collaboration with Phoenix Ophthalmology Group in Tripoli.

## Helping Hand Program

In 2021, SAMS piloted The Helping Hand psychosocial support program for teens in Lebanon. The program combined evidence-based cognitive behavioral techniques with groundbreaking learning technology to provide young people with accessible and engaging emotional support. With trained teachers and psychosocial workers acting as facilitators, the project uses an application with playable simulations that provide a safe environment to prepare youth for life's challenges and facilitate dialogue about key psychosocial themes to address in a population impacted by violence and the trauma of war and displacement.

The project's main objective is to introduce emotional management, relationship components, and structure to children who have been impacted by violence, trauma, and displacement. Through this program, children learn to interact with each other in a safe space and acquire critical skills, including problem-solving.

SAMS expanded its robust psychosocial support program to reach new locations in Tripoli using a remote model of assessment and awareness sessions targeting children and caregivers in the Dar Al Ataa' center, where the team helped over 150 beneficiaries. Topics included self-esteem, recognizing the signs of stress, positive coping mechanisms, critical thinking, and how to talk about different emotions.



**"In Lebanon, SAMS' Helping Hands program continues to change children's lives, giving them the space and tools they need to reclaim their mental health.**

**A participant of the program, Heba Junaid, shared her recent experience, explaining how afterward she could more comfortably share and speak with her family and friends, use her talents to express herself, and utilize other techniques she learned to help her reclaim her mental health.**



## Food Baskets

In January 2021, SAMS began its Food Basket project in partnership with FoodBlessed, providing food assistance across nine governorates in Lebanon. This initiative included the recruitment and training of volunteers, procurement of food items, packaging of food boxes, and delivery to beneficiaries across the country. Throughout 2021, SAMS and FoodBlessed prepared and delivered a total of 5,000 food boxes to 29,945 beneficiaries in 5,000 households.



## Winterization Efforts

In 2021, the region faced harsh winter storms, and in Lebanon, the extreme winter conditions increased the hardships faced by refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants from Syria and other countries.

SAMS teams worked to deliver crucial winterization supplies such as blankets, rechargeable lights, and other essentials to more than 1,000 households in Beirut, and 11 informal settlements in the Beka'a Valley, to help support them through the season.

## Turkey

In 2021, SAMS reached 4,778 beneficiaries and supported 110 medical and non-medical workers in Turkey. SAMS provided 10,074 services and 2,661 consultations free of charge through all 5 of its facilities: MHPSS and Physical Rehabilitation centers in Gaziantep and Istanbul, an Autism Spectrum Disorders center in Istanbul, an MHPSS center in Kilis and a youth center in Reyhanli.



## MHPSS Centers In Southern Turkey

Throughout 2021, SAMS continued providing services in its Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Center in Gaziantep, Turkey. The center's services included individual and group counseling sessions, group activities, and workshops for vulnerable individuals who had experienced trauma as a result of the ongoing conflict in Syria. In addition, SAMS expanded its operations in Turkey with the support of the US Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) by opening a second MHPSS Center in the Killis governorate. The new center serves as a resource to support the large population of Syrian refugees in Kilis as they seek support for their mental health needs.

## Physical Rehabilitation Center

To improve access to physical therapy services for Syrian refugees in Turkey, SAMS established a specialized rehabilitation center in Gaziantep where people with disabilities and mobility challenges can receive treatment. Services included consultations for and management of spinal cord injuries, post-operational amputations, and peripheral nerve injuries. During these consultations, beneficiaries were assessed, and treatment plans were developed, including physiotherapy treatment sessions and the provision of mobility aids and orthotics as needed. In 2021, this center provided services to 6,772 beneficiaries

## Take My Hand Special Education Center

In 2021, SAMS continued to work with its partners to implement specialized educational, behavioral, and physical support services to Syrian refugee children in Istanbul with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The program reached 100 children in 2021, providing each of them with development and learning sessions that are tailored to their needs. Depending on the child's learning plan, these sessions included developing expressive speech, self-care, play, activities to develop gross and fine motor skills, imitation and other social skills, and literacy. The program also included group therapy sessions and activities, sensory integrative therapy to help the children process sensory inputs more effectively, educational sessions on ASD, and consultations for the children's caregivers. SAMS facilitated remote communication and technical exchange between the center's team and experts at the Princeton Child Development Institute (PCDI) in the US, a non-profit program that offers science-based services for children and youth with autism. Collaboration has focused on professional training and the application of new quality treatment approaches.



## MHPSS and Rehabilitation Center in Istanbul

In November 2021, SAMS expanded its services in Istanbul by partnering with the Refugee Assistance and Solidarity Association (RASAS), with additional support from PRM. The newly-available services included the provision of specialized MHPSS consultations, as well as individual and group PSS sessions through two facilities in Istanbul. SAMS also supported RASAS in providing physiotherapy, prosthesis, and speech therapy at its facilities to 3,302 beneficiaries.





# Greece

In 2021, SAMS' Greece office, known as SAMS Hellas, continued its own local medical missions to ensure that the communities we serve have access to high quality care. Throughout the year, SAMS Hellas teams on the ground and local partners strived to ensure that initiatives such as our Mobile Medical Program, pediatric vaccination campaign, pediatric residency partnership, and our continued work with IOM were successful and served a total of 11,162 beneficiaries.

**Despite the challenges, including COVID-19 restrictions and beneficiary status (registered/unregistered), among numerous others, the SAMS Hellas team provided 7,838 Medical Services and reached 11,162 beneficiaries in 2021.**

## Mobile Medical Program

SAMS Hellas' Mobile Medical Team program began in 2020 and continued throughout 2021. The team consisted of two pediatricians, a nurse, an OB/GYN specialist, a midwife, and Arabic and Farsi interpreters who provided health care services to the communities in 6 refugee camps in the Attica region and 2 clinics in the center of Athens. Through this program, SAMS served outpatient clinics offering primary health care for women and children, health awareness sessions, school physical, vaccination campaigns so refu-



-gee and migrant children can be admitted to local schools and resume their education. The team also arranged referrals for advanced medical care and monitored patients' progress through follow-up care for chronic illnesses. The Mobile Medical team program added a general practitioner later in the year to meet the increased demands and expand to new locations. It served 7838 beneficiaries throughout the year.

SAMS Hellas established successful relationships with the Ministry of Migration & Asylum for approvals, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the National Public Health Organization

(NPHO- EODY), the International Organization of Migration, and the Camps Managements.

### Impact Story

“Anisah’s mother brought her in for a checkup at SAMS’ pediatric clinic in Ritsona. With the help of an Arabic translator, pediatricians at the clinic could access Anisah’s medical records, address her flu symptoms, and give Anisah the routine vaccinations she needed. Staff also provided Anisah and her mother with the information and resources they needed to keep Anisah healthy. Anisah and her mother are one of many families that have benefited from SAMS’ vaccination campaign.”

### Partnership with Attikon University

Beginning in October 2021, SAMS established a partnership with Attikon University Hospital that facilitated the inclusion of the hospital’s pediatric residents in SAMS clinic’s activities for 2-week rotations. In addition to supporting the clinics’ ongoing work and supporting pediatric residents with new opportunities to learn, this initiative also created a strong line of communication with the hospital for cases that needed specialized medical care, such as patients with chronic illnesses or those who required specialized medical examinations that cannot be provided with the equipment available in refugee camps.



# Iraq

In Iraq, the medical system is under significant strain following years of conflict, financial crisis, and a surge in refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). As a result, SAMS extends relief services to those in need of medical care and helps to lessen the suffering of vulnerable communities. In 2021, SAMS reached 10,429 beneficiaries, offering 11,370 services.

## Dental Clinic

The Bardarash refugee camp in Iraq is home to approximately 18,000 Syrian refugees who have few options for basic medical care. A SAMS-supported dental clinic for Syrian refugees in the Bardarash refugee camp started in September 2020, and throughout 2021, it continued to offer its services to 3591 beneficiaries.

SAMS medical staff continue to conduct daily assessments of services provided, to improve access to quality health care for refugees and displaced populations. Additionally, SAMS distributed dental supplies and held oral hygiene awareness sessions and screening and prevention campaigns for children.



## Partnerships and Collaborations

On 24 April 2021, a fire at the Ibn Al-Khateeb hospital in south Baghdad left at least 82 people dead and 110 injured. The fire started with the explosion of oxygen tanks designated for COVID-19 patients. Through partnering with Direct Relief and Give To The World, SAMS provided vital life-saving medical supplies, 70 portable fire extinguishers, and held remote educational workshops in moderate to severe COVID case management in response to the fire.

Equipment like oxygen cylinders, monitors, ECG machines, CPAP machines, and others ensured that the Ministry of Health (MOH) reopened the COVID floor immediately to curb the rise in Covid-19 cases, while remaining in compliance with required safety and fire prevention guidelines. Ibn Al Khateeb Hospital, which treats an average of 100-150 patients each month, continues to utilize this equipment.

## Winterization Efforts

For refugees and displaced populations, winter can be the most challenging time of the year. In 2021, SAMS provided life-saving winterization assistance in the form of heaters, fuel, and blankets for 1000 beneficiaries, thanks to the kind generosity of its donors and supporters. This effort extended direly needed relief for 200 families.

## Emergency Medical Assistance for Civilians in Gaza

Following the attacks in Gaza in May 2021, SAMS approved an emergency grant of \$100,000 for the Palestinian American Medical Association (PAMA) to provide urgent medical supplies to Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza which received injured Palestinian civilians in need of urgent and lifesaving treatments.





“ We were living a normal life. I was able to work and treat my sick son up until the war started. We were forced to leave and seek refuge in Iraq. We have lost everything.  
Ahmed Ibrahim, a Syrian resident of the Gawilan camp  
in Dahouk, Iraq.



# SAMS Medical Education Programs

Over a decade of conflict has severely eroded the human resources of Syria's health system. With at least 945 health workers killed in Syria since the start of the conflict, a lack of qualified medical professionals is one of the most significant barriers for civilians in accessing quality health services. Therefore, SAMS prioritizes the training and retention of new health workers to meet the growing needs of the Syrian people.

To achieve this goal, SAMS has worked to support medical education over the past decade. SAMS prioritized this mission over the past year by allowing medical students to continue their education and use their learned skills to give back to their communities. One of SAMS missions is to equip the next generation of health care providers with the skills and tools to face any challenges and prepare them to give their patients top-quality care. It is achieving this goal through SAMS Midwifery Institute, Nurse Training program, residency opportunities in diverse medical specialties in Syria, and similar programs. The 6 months fellowship program for midwifery graduates and the virtual training in critical care for physicians are good examples of the SAMS initiative's value.

## Medical Residency Program

In 2021, SAMS continued its investment in developing residency training opportunities for medical graduates who could not complete their specialization due to conflict. In collaboration with other health actors in NWS, SAMS' Resident Doctors Program aims to provide financial and technical support for physicians in training within different specialties. The resident doctors are supervised by SAMS facilities specialized doctors under the Syrian Board of Medical Specialties (SBOMS) academic, training, and curriculum standards. SAMS Technical Committees of US-based doctors also support the program by conducting periodic lectures and clinical case management sessions. SAMS supported more than 50 medical residents in 14 Specializations at 14 hospitals in 2021.



## SAMS Scholarship Program

As part of its expanding education programs, SAMS renewed scholarships to 28 Syrian students, in the fields of medicine, dentistry, and in pharmacy in 2021. The majority of the recipients of these competitive awards are students who started their studies in Syrian-accredited universities but were interrupted by the conflict. These students participated in the provision of medical and humanitarian care in the areas in which they resided in Syria before continuing their studies. Between January 2016 and December 2021, 16 students completed their studies and obtained their medical degrees.

For the academic year 2021/2022, SAMS started a new type of scholarship sponsorship for the tuition of high school graduates from among the refugees in Jordan and Lebanon who got accepted into health sciences colleges (nursing, nutrition, psychology, physical therapy, and rehabilitation). 13 students were enrolled.

## SAMS Midwifery Program

SAMS has developed and implemented midwifery education curricula and programs in Syria since 2018. These programs, which have received accreditation from UNFPA and WHO, are aligned with the Midwifery Capacity-Building Strategy for Northern Syria, to which SAMS is an active contributor, as well as relevant global standards, such as the International Confederation of Midwives Global Standards for Midwifery Education. To promote the integration of gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response within sexual and reproductive health care, SAMS midwifery programs provide students with training in GBV Basic Concepts, Clinical Management of Rape, screening of GBV cases, gender sensitivity, and Psychological First Aid, among others. Student midwives are also afforded the opportunity to spend some of their clinical rotations working within SAMS-supported safe spaces for women and girls, which are typically hosted within or near health facilities.

The Midwifery programs are managed by a team of experienced physicians and midwives on staff in medical facilities in Syria; in-person theoretical, practical, and clinical training are provided by trained clinical teaching staff, while technical assistance (curriculum review, remote and in-person technical training in the latest methods, and one-on-one mentoring) is also provided by committees of Arabic-speaking specialists among SAMS membership, mainly based in the United States.

Over the past three years, SAMS has graduated 85 midwives from its midwifery education programs, many of whom have gone on to find employment within the northwest Syria health sector, filling a critical gap in sexual and reproductive health care. In 2021, the SAMS medical training institute in Al-Atareb in Aleppo governorate enrolled 13 nurses in an 18-month program track that allows

them to gain the required knowledge and skills to practice as midwives.

Donors of SAMS' midwifery education activities include the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Government of Luxembourg, as well as private donors.

### Impact Story

**Radiya received her degree after three years at SAMS Health Institute in Idlib, where she was able to follow her dream of “developing experience, learning more about medicine, and helping as many mothers as possible.”**

**Radiya now works as a midwife at the Maternity Hospital in Idlib. Her work exemplifies the crucial nature of these education programs in communities facing a severe shortage of health workers. SAMS and its partners are working hard to ensure that the medical sector in NW Syria is strengthened by a new generation of health workers.**



## Nursing Program

SAMS has operated nursing training programs since 2015, first graduating 93 nurse assistants. Seeing ongoing gaps, we transitioned in 2018 to a two-year program which has graduated 108 fully-qualified nurses to date. The nurses in this program receive 30 hours a week of theoretical training, as well as clinical lessons under the supervision of qualified trainers. The graduates receive diplomas recognized by the Idlib Health Directorate, and many go on to work in SAMS facilities.



interactive webinars on COVID-19 management, critical care, radiology, stroke, and obstetrical care. In these webinars, US-based specialists and the field medical teams worked together in developing and implementing management protocols, treatment guidelines, assessment and prevention of complications, and discussions on lessons learned and discoveries. The success of this interaction paved the way to expand into other specialties. This process resulted in the formation of a library of medical lectures in adult and pediatric ICU, OB/GYN, radiology, and neurology.



## Innovative Programs

To guarantee that the communities it serves and the medical professionals have access to the best treatment and resources, SAMS continued its awareness-raising and educational initiatives, focusing on fellowship training in medical subspecialties.

In March of 2021, SAMS launched a pilot program for Adult Critical Care Medicine for 11 physicians in 3 SAMS-supported hospitals in NWS. This program covered various topics, including basic ICU management, assisted ventilation, cardiac, respiratory, and neurological emergencies. It also covered renal replacement therapy and infection prevention and control. The 6 months pilot program came to an end in August 2021.

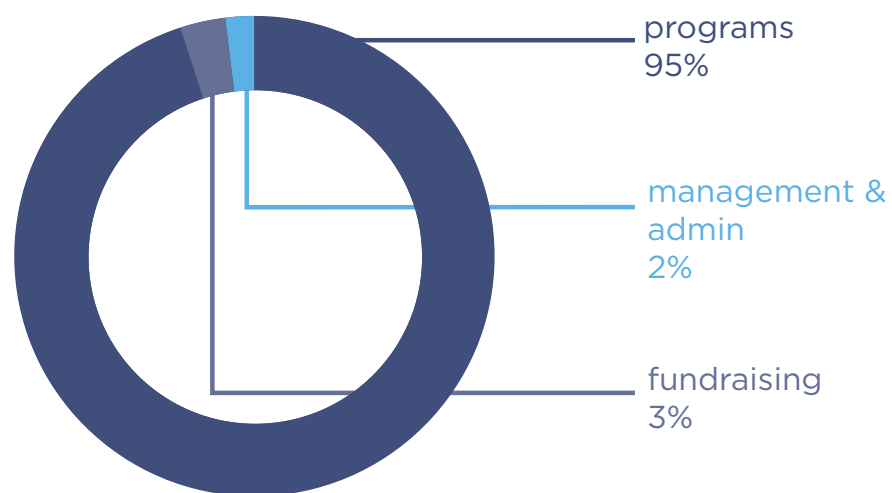
Applying new and innovative training methods was a major achievement in 2021 and remains a goal going forward. SAMS organized virtual daily rounds, training, and peer-to-peer support management in SAMS' five COVID-19 facilities, totaling 1,350 hours. Additionally, SAMS offered over 200 hours of



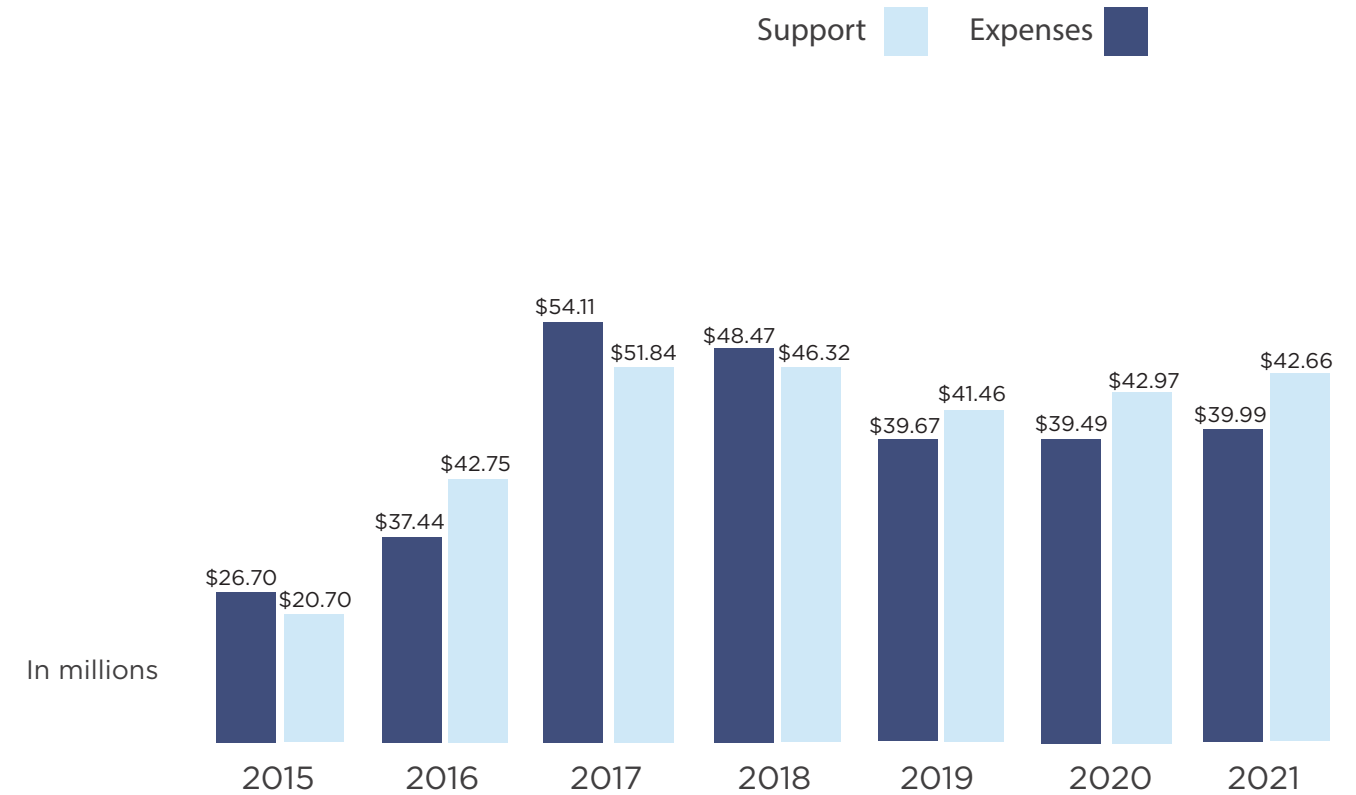
# FINANCIAL REPORT

SUPPORT AND OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS		
	2020	2021
Contributions	\$7,348,466	\$7,589,368
Grants	\$30,594,621	\$30,458,483
Gifts in Kind	\$5,031,591	\$4,615,207
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$42,974,678</b>	<b>\$42,663,058</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
	\$12,631,031	\$15,307,242
EXPENSES		
	2020	2021
<b>Program Services</b>		
Medical Relief Program	\$37,972,640	\$38,114,088
<b>Supporting Services</b>		
Management and General	\$689,203	\$929,999
Fundraising	\$828,466	\$942,760
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$39,490,309</b>	<b>\$39,986,847</b>

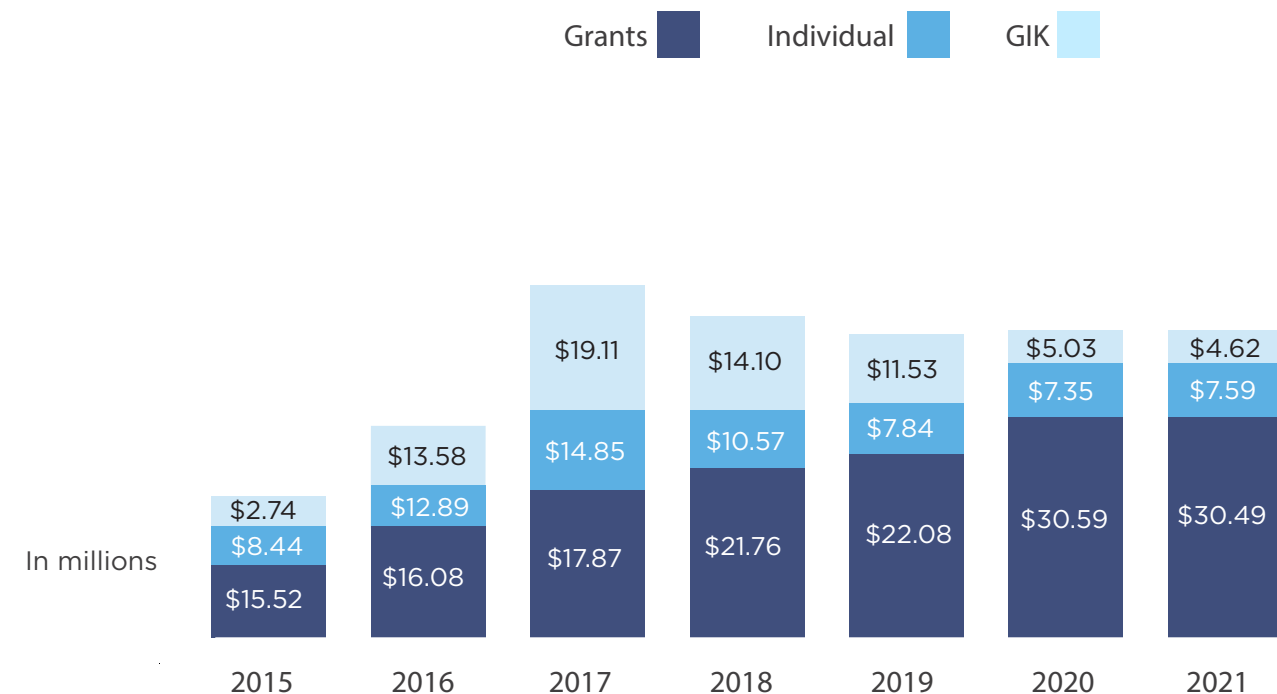
2021 DISTRIBUTION OF EXPENSES



## FINANCIALS OVER 7 YEARS INCLUDING GIFTS IN KIND



## SOURCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT



# Advocacy

SAMS advocacy efforts seek to amplify the voices of Syrian health workers and civilians alike and to highlight the humanitarian needs facing Syrians and other vulnerable populations in the communities we serve. We also advocate for policy commitments to provide dignified, quality health care and protection to health workers and their patients in conflict-affected areas. To pursue these goals, SAMS meets with policymakers worldwide, engages with senior UN officials, and collaborates with Syrian and international NGOs to amplify our voices. This past year included a heavy focus on securing greater support for the COVID-19 response in Syria, new donor contributions for chronic care and medical education programs, and continued advocacy supporting the UN cross-border mechanism.

## UN Advocacy

SAMS engages regularly and extensively with the UN, prioritizing the protection of health facilities and the continuation of cross-border aid access. SAMS holds regular meetings and events with UN member states, as well as engages with UN coordination mechanisms and accountability mechanisms at the working level.

In July 2021, SAMS played a leading role in successfully advocating for the renewal of the Security Council's cross-border aid resolution, which has been renewed annually or bi-annually since its adoption in 2014. The cross-border aid mechanism is a vital lifeline for over 4 million people in northern Syria who face deteriorating economic conditions, ongoing conflict and displacement, and the perils of the COVID-19 pandemic. SAMS partnered with other NGOs to advocate for the renewal and also facilitated meetings between UN member states and SAMS staff on the ground in Syria so that policymakers could hear about the impact of the resolution directly from the people who rely on it.

## US Government and Congressional Advocacy

SAMS maintains strong relationships with the US Government, including Members of Congress, USAID, the White House, and the State Department. SAMS leadership and staff hold regular meetings with these stakeholders to discuss the humanitarian situation in Syria.

In March, SAMS partnered with other NGOs and CSIS to develop a series of thematic reports examining the state of Syria a decade into the conflict. SAMS co-authored the report on attacks on health and participated in meetings with government officials to discuss these reports and explore pathways to fill gaps in the humanitarian response and end impunity for attacks on health. As the COVID-19 pandemic saw cases surge in October, SAMS held meetings with the State Department, USAID, and Congressional offices to discuss the dire impact of vaccine shortages in the COVID-19 response.



## EU Advocacy

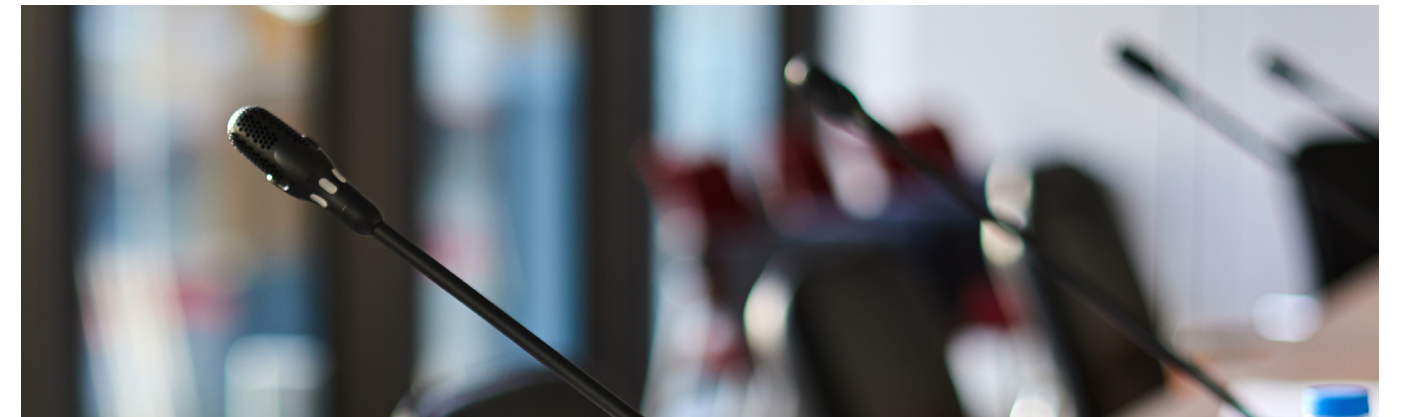
In 2021, SAMS continued to expand its relationships with the EU and its Member States. SAMS undertook extensive advocacy efforts in Brussels and national capitals in support of increased support for the COVID-19 response, humanitarian assistance, accountability for attacks on health, and protection of refugees and vulnerable populations. Throughout the year, SAMS engaged with the governments of Ireland, Norway, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Malta.

Many of this year's advocacy efforts before the EU focused on responding to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. SAMS held high-level meetings with senior officials in key capitals to advocate for donating more vaccines to Syria, additional medicine, and funding for specialized health facilities. As a result of these efforts, the government of France sent a large donation of medical supplies to SAMS facilities in NW Syria, and Italy made a large donation of vaccines to the COVAX mechanism for distribution in Syria.

As part of SAMS ongoing commitment to pursuing justice and accountability for attacks on health and violations of international humanitarian law, extensive briefings were held with officials in key capitals and included the participation of humanitarian workers from inside Syria. This provided

donors and policymakers with the opportunity to hear directly from the victims of such attacks.

During the Fifth Brussels Conference for Syria, SAMS hosted a virtual side-event focused on “Rethinking the Provision of Health Services in NW Syria after ten years of Crisis.” Dr. Mufaddal Hamadeh, SAMS President, and Dr. Mazen Kewara, SAMS Turkey Country Director, delivered presentations focused on the need for donors to prioritize support for chronic illnesses and capacity-building. Several SAMS staff from inside Syria also participated and provided a detailed overview of the current humanitarian needs, as well as the ongoing challenges faced by health workers. SAMS also participated in a side event organized by the Syrian Civil Society Networks Platform titled “Why Durable Solutions Inside Syria Remain Untenable after a Decade of Conflict.” During this event, Dima Marawi, SAMS Advocacy Officer, gave a presentation on MHPSS, arguing that there is a need for more comprehensive services to be available to the population in NW Syria.



## Regional Advocacy

In Lebanon, SAMS is a member of the Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF), and works with OCHA and UNHCR on increased protection and humanitarian assistance for Syrian refugees. SAMS also worked with local Lebanese NGOs to serve both refugees and local Lebanese.

In Jordan, SAMS is a member of the Jordan INGO Forum (JIF) and Syria International NGO Forum (SIRF), where we contribute to collective NGO efforts to provide high-quality research, fact sheets, and humanitarian needs assessment to policy makers and donors. We also work closely with UNHCR to advocate for increased support for Syrian refugees in Jordan, and we partner with the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation on humanitarian work in the country.

In Turkey, SAMS is a member of the Northwest Syria NGO Forum and the Syrian NGO Alliance (SNA). SAMS also actively participates in the UN OCHA-led humanitarian cluster coordination mechanism and provides input and policy recommendations thanks to its membership in the Health Cluster, Protection Cluster, Humanitarian Liaison Group (HLG), and the advisory board of the cross-border humanitarian fund (HF).

SAMS advocacy in 2021 focused heavily on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. SAMS advocated for humanitarian access for health personnel and medical supplies policy, provided recommendations for COVID-19 testing and case management, and prepared assessments to import oxygen to Syria. SAMS also advocated for more integration of specialized health services and improved referral mechanisms across the borders.

SAMS also collaborated and shared information with accountability mechanisms to support the goal of ending impunity for attacks on health, including the Commission of inquiry (CoI) and the International Independent and Impartial mechanism (IIIM) for International Humanitarian Law Violations in Syria.

# SAMS Community Efforts

## Board Members

SAMS Community Outreach (SCO) empowers SAMS members across the United States to engage with individuals and communities who face socioeconomic barriers to receiving adequate health-care. SCO's flagship project is SAMS Midwest Free Specialty Clinic. Located in Willowbrook, IL, the clinic provides free subspecialty services in cardiology, pulmonology, endocrinology, and gynecology services for low-income individuals. In 2021, SAMS Midwest Free Specialty Clinic provided 95 free consultations for 53 patients.

The clinic is run entirely by SAMS Member volunteers, including seven physicians, two administrators, and dozens of medical and health professions students. In 2021, the clinic entered its third year of operations. SAMS is proud of our Members' commitment to the health and wellbeing of their communities and looks forward to continuing to design impactful community health programs in the US.

## Conferences and Events

After nearly two years of being unable to hold in-person events due to the COVID-19 pandemic, SAMS organized two major conferences: SAMS 2nd International Symposium in Trabzon, Turkey, and SAMS 10th National Conference in Chicago, IL.

In Turkey, the one-day symposium focused on the theme of "COVID-19 Pandemic: Lessons Learned Moving Forward" and brought together over 100 physicians, allied health professionals, trainees, and SAMS staff and Board Members. The symposium held a fundraising gala, attended by nearly 200 SAMS Members, honored guests, sponsors, and staff.

In Chicago, SAMS 10th National Conference was held over Labor Day Weekend. The conference themed "Global Challenges and Breakthroughs in Healthcare Delivery and Disparities Through the Pandemic" was attended by over 100 medical professionals, humanitarians, and SAMS staff. The keynote lecture was delivered by Dr. Safwan Halabi, who discussed developments in artificial intelligence in medicine and their multiple impacts on healthcare disparities. SAMS was especially thankful for the support and attendance of honored guests, including messages from the Chicago Mayor's Office, Administrator of USAID Samantha Power, US House Representative Marie Newman, and many more.



## Speaking Engagements

SAMS Members also contributed immensely to advancing SAMS humanitarian mission by presenting SAMS' work in academic conferences and media. In February, SAMS volunteer medical missions leader Dr. Hend Azhary presented on SAMS Jordan Missions at the Friends of David Nott Foundation Society (FDNF) conference, a virtual event organized at Manchester University in the UK. Dr. Bachir Tajaldin, Senior Programs Manager in SAMS Turkey office, also presented on SAMS response to COVID-19 in Northwest Syria. Additionally, in late 2021, SAMS Former Chairman Dr. Maher Azzouz participated in a webinar series by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Dr. Azzouz shared SAMS experience as a diaspora organization and how its members have a unique position and opportunity to organize culturally appropriate, impactful humanitarian assistance in their countries of origin and others.

SAMS Mental Health Specialist Dr. Dana Townsend represented SAMS at the Global Forum on Humanitarian Health Research, hosted by the National Institutes of Health and the UK Medical Research Council. Dr. Townsend shared SAMS' experiences developing the telepsychiatry program in Idlib and working to strengthen mental health capacity in Northwest Syria. The presentation also focused on the challenges of resource management in humanitarian contexts and the importance of designing operational research that is focused and actionable.

## Medical Research and Scientific Publication

SAMS' Research Committee Members represented SAMS at various national and international meetings focusing on research on healthcare in conflict and new advancements in global health spheres. They published on different aspects of healthcare in the context of the Syrian conflict with a focus on advocacy in academic venues such as the Lancet Global Health, British Medical Journal, SAMS own journal, the Avicenna Journal of Medicine and Conflict, and Health.

SAMS also continued to analyze routinely collected data in close collaboration with the teams in the region and to support talented Syrian researchers to develop their skills and present their work at international events. Examples of research activities are analyzing the data on more than 77,000 deliveries in SAMS facilities in northwest Syria and examining trends of C-sections and under-age pregnancies, the analysis of over 5 million consultations in SAMS projects that showed 24% were of respiratory presentations, highlighting the importance of adequate preparation for the management of this category of illnesses to decrease their morbidities and mortality, and a retrospective review of specialist referrals for refugees into Greece's health system. Findings from selected research studies were presented at academic events like the European Public Health Association, the Consortium of Universities in Public Health, and MSF Scientific Days.

SAMS continued to promote excellence in medicine by supporting the Avicenna Journal of Medicine in 2021. This journal is an open access, peer-reviewed online medical journal with an editorial board of 30 international members that publishes 4 issues annually.

## Members Engagement

The Syrian American Medical Society is a member-driven professional organization of healthcare providers of Syrian descent and their colleagues who share similar goals of advancing medical education and dignified healthcare in the US and beyond.

Members contributed to enhancing the quality of care and capacity building at SAMS facilities in Syria through SAMS specialized committees provision of peer-to-peer consultation, clinical guidelines and best practices, online lectures, interactive webinars and educational courses. This engagement helped establish the oncology and pathology programs, advance neonatal critical care, manage patients with chronic kidney failure or kidney transplant, and conduct Tele-psych sessions for beneficiaries in Idlib. It also advanced the quality of dental services in SAMS primary care clinics, sharing up-to-date information on best practices in COVID-19 case management and starting the planning of interventional cardiac services.



Members are a great support to planning SAMS internal medical missions in neighboring countries with SAMS country teams. They help identify the medical needs of the refugees, recruit skilled local volunteers, and ensure adequate financial resources are available. Another valuable input is establishing patient selection criteria, proper screening and follow-up procedures, and building relationships with local health clinics so mission services complement their services to the beneficiaries and the host communities.

Selecting specialized medical staff in specialized projects and facilities falls mainly on the members. They offer support by drafting job descriptions, establishing required credentials and conducting online interviews of candidates in similar fields of medicine alongside the country team representative.

Many members conduct field visits to SAMS' projects and facilities in the region and inside Syria to help assess the need in the camps and urban areas, evaluate the level and quality of care, and witness the results of targeting healthcare facilities and rehabilitation work.

Member support for the medical students and new graduates is immense. They help them identify different career pathways, learn the residency application process and interview skills, and provide mentorship on research projects. Furthermore, member representation of SAMS in media engagements and academic conferences are of great value as they share SAMS' experiences and accomplishments at diaspora, NGO and international meetings.

# SAMS IN THE NEWS

Syrian refugees forgotten as attention shifts to new conflicts, expert says



Here's What New Gutter Guards Should Cost You.

EUROPE

Seeing parallels, doctors apply lessons from Syria to their work in Ukraine

September 4, 2022 · 5:17 PM ET

Heard on *All Things Considered*

TIM MAK

3-Minute Listen

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OPINION | COMMENTARY

*Treating Ukraine's Wounded Civilians, I Saw Horror and Hope*

The injuries they suffered in Kharkiv brought back memories of my experience as a volunteer in Syria.

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- Dr. Abdulfatah Elshaar (Secretary)
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- Dr. Randa Loutfi, Director of Programs
- Safaa Aladham, Director of Finance



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Syrian American Medical Society



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