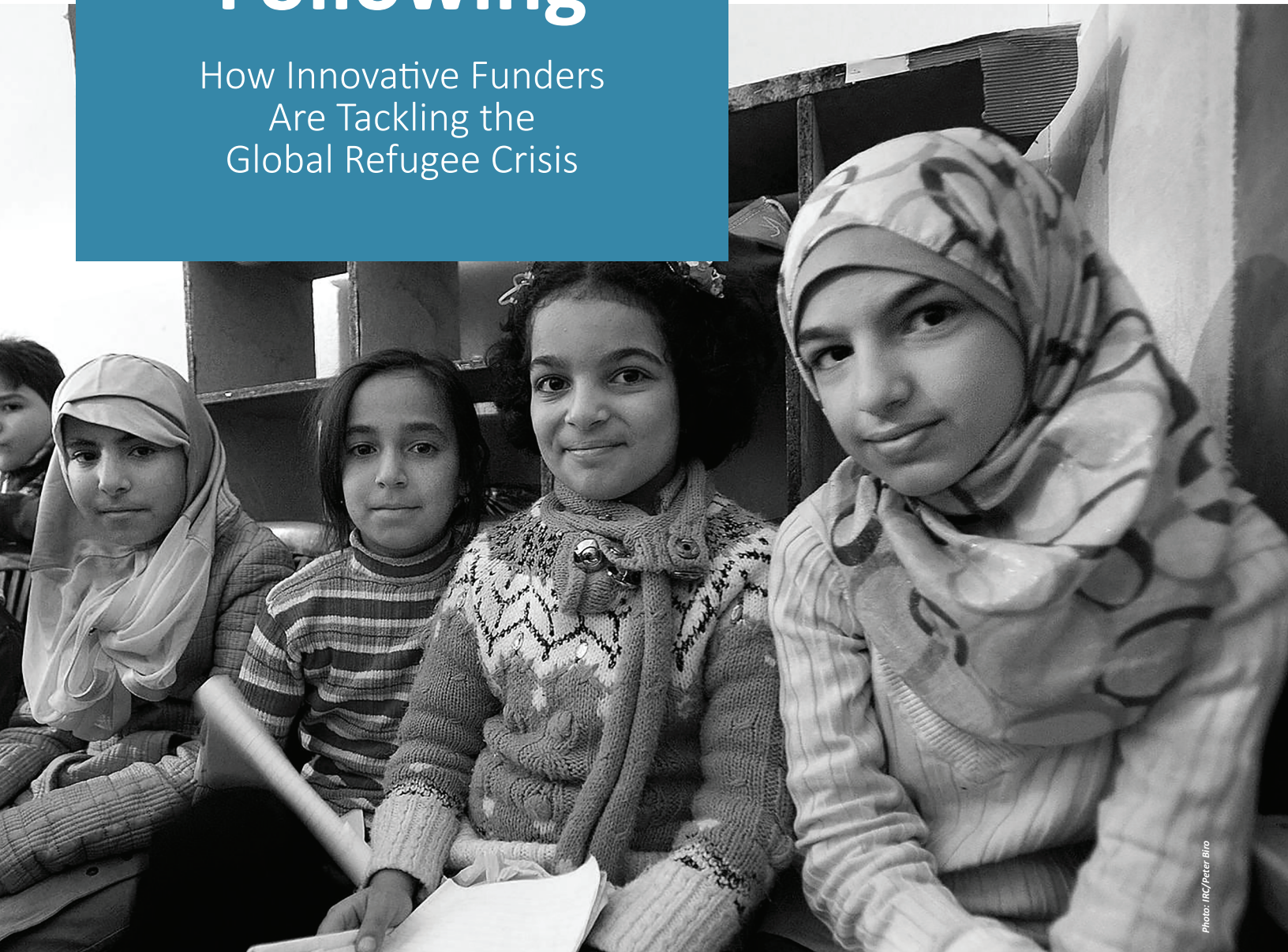




**Center for Disaster Philanthropy**  
The when, where and how of informed disaster giving

# Funding Worth Following

How Innovative Funders  
Are Tackling the  
Global Refugee Crisis



# A Global Crisis That Demands Inspired Solutions

Often quietly and without fanfare, funders have stepped forward to meet the ongoing and ever-expanding challenge of the global refugee crisis. While governments wrangle with the politics and policy surrounding refugees, private funders have moved quickly to address the unprecedented movement of people around the world.

The historic scale of need demands funding solutions that are built on new partnerships and groundbreaking technologies. Many funders have chosen to tackle various aspects of the crisis in creative and collaborative ways that will make a difference for years to come.

The global refugee crisis is one that demands action. It will take the time, talent, and financial resources of the private funder community to help and protect millions of affected people.

Here are four examples of funders who are addressing the refugee crisis in innovative ways:

# 1

## Center for Disaster Philanthropy

In 2015, the Center for Disaster Philanthropy (CDP) received an important lead gift from The Patterson Foundation, which has a particular interest in funding innovative solutions that stimulate increased donor participation. The resulting Global Refugee Crisis Fund provided CDP the resources to award three grants to the International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, and Concern Worldwide. The last two are particularly unique because the funds went to programs inside Syria. Refugees are often relocated up to twenty times while

displaced, and usually, at least three to five of those times are inside their native country. The programs operated by Mercy Corps and Concern Worldwide work with adolescents in Syria who have been displaced by the ongoing conflict. The grants support education, skills training, psychosocial support, and other programs for Syrian youth. The programs have served almost twice the number of expected adolescents, even with continuing violence around them, and the families of these children also see secondary benefits.



Photo: Mercy Corps

### WHY IT MATTERS:

Funding inside Syria is something many funders shy away from. It is difficult to find small programs and local nongovernment organizations inside Syria that can provide appropriate documentation to meet U.S. standards. Even when working with larger organizations that do have the necessary accreditation, some funders dislike the political and religious tones of the conflict. Many are also concerned with the transparency issues. For security reasons, the details of work inside Syria are not publicly released and larger organizations frequently need to partner with small, local organizations. CDP's grants committee felt allocating these grants inside of Syria was a good way set an example to other funders on how to boost small programs with big results inside a conflict area. In addition, CDP's refugee fund gave donors the opportunity to leverage their smaller donations by collaborating on larger, higher-impact projects.

Students participate in an English lesson at one of Mercy Corps' youth centers inside Syria.



# 2

## Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders

EMHRF awarded a series of 15 grants to organizations working to support human rights access and programs in the Syria region. Human rights, internationally outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, include 30 specific items focused on preserving the dignity of human beings. They include the right to have a state, the right to education, the right to be detained without torture, and many similar items. There is widespread evidence of human rights abuses and war atrocities against innocents in the Syria conflict.

For example, a 2013 report from Oxford Research Group, [Stolen Futures](#), found evidence during the conflict's first three years of at least 764 summary executions of children, 388 targeted deaths by snipers, and 112 instances of torture and death of children under the age of 17. It is believed that actual

numbers during that three-year time frame are much higher. Women in refugee camps are often at high risk for rape and gender-based violence.

EMHRF worked with small, grassroots organizations not likely to receive support elsewhere. Their funding supported a wide spectrum of human rights-based approaches, including:

- documentation and research of human rights abuses of refugees, especially in the Syrian conflict;
- protection and support for those most vulnerable to human rights abuses—women, children, elderly, and disabled; and
- legal representation, protection, and capacity-building programs for incarcerated or detained demonstrators, human rights defenders, and key judiciaries and lawyers.



### WHY IT MATTERS:

It's easy to think that providing for immediate needs and basic necessities such as food and water is more important than documenting human rights abuses. But human rights work is an essential part of long-term recovery. The documentation of human rights abuses paves the way for open discussions, truth commissions, and war tribunals, and it is key to transitional peace and justice following the end of a conflict. Human rights are central to maintaining civil society and necessary to tolerance among differing groups. It takes bold leaders to champion international legal norms and rights and bold funders to help them do so, which is what makes this particular group of grants something to pay attention to.

Wounded civilians arrive at a hospital in Aleppo.

# 3 NoVo Foundation

The NoVo Foundation awarded a grant to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to conduct an assessment in Lebanon on the exposure of women and girls to gender-based violence, including pervasive sexual violence. Rape and sexual violence were identified as the most extensive and sweeping form of violence faced by women and girls while inside of Syria, and often one of the key reasons they chose to flee Syria. Adolescent girls identified early marriage and “survival sex” as other forms of violence they faced after fleeing to Lebanon.

NoVo Foundation’s initial grant to the IRC assessed the needs of women and girls in this area of protection. Subsequent funding implemented a program to improve access to timely, holistic, quality case-management and psychosocial services, and reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to gender-based violence by minimizing risks and strengthening their protective environment. This project is particularly noteworthy because it occurred in Lebanon where there are a significant number of refugees, but no formal refugee camps.



## WHY IT MATTERS:

By the time a refugee flees their home country, they have usually already seen or been subjected to violence and trauma. Protecting them from further violence is often difficult in transitional settings. Not only did this particular project assess the incidents women and girls had already been subjected to (part of the needed documentation and research for helping others and the human rights needs noted above); it then implemented a program to meet the emotional and physical needs of women and girls in these vulnerable situations.

*In 2015, the IRC and partners provided 15,000 Syrian women and girls in Lebanon with training and counseling.*

# 4 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded a large grant to Mercy Corps to identify and address the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) challenges presented by the complex humanitarian emergency in Syria and the surrounding region. Inside Syria, warring parties have interrupted the water supply to civilians—the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) recorded at least eighteen deliberate water cuts in 2015. Bombings have damaged the infrastructure that carries water to many homes, and community taps built by nongovernmental groups in recent years are the supply lines that have been targeted in the continuing conflict. The unpredictability of war makes the process of going to collect water dangerous and sometimes deadly, and municipal workers are often unable to carry out necessary repairs. In addition, power cuts make it difficult for water to be pumped through the supply lines that are still available. The consequences of dirty water—diarrhea, typhoid, hepatitis, and other diseases—are more severe inside Syria as well, where access to medical care is often minimal, or dangerous.

Refugees throughout the Syria region do not usually have access to clean water. Most formal camps cannot support the basic standards of water supply, and many of the countries surrounding Syria are in water-scarce situations already. Jordan, for example, is one of the ten most water-scarce countries in the world. In some areas, the water supply per refugee is about 30 liters per day, or one-tenth of what the average American uses.

*Above right: For every \$1 invested in WASH projects, the World Health Organization estimates a \$5 to \$28 return in increased productivity and decreased healthcare costs.*



## WHY IT MATTERS:

Water is an essential element that affects health, the availability of work, children’s ability to attend school, and much more. Taking on water projects inside Syria and the surrounding area is important and requires a funder who is willing to think outside the box. Though often complex and large, WASH projects are one of the most important investments funders can make in a community. For every \$1 invested in WASH projects, the World Health Organization estimates a \$5 to \$28 return in increased productivity and decreased healthcare costs.

The grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation was significant and resulted in comprehensive work to identify and address major challenges and potential solutions in the WASH sector both inside Syria and in the region. Mercy Corps was also able to partner with Xylem Watermark, who provided water filtration and purification equipment as well as staff expertise on water and sanitation infrastructure to work with Mercy Corps’ staff. Xylem and Mercy Corps have jointly responded to water and sanitation emergencies in eight countries since 2008, including providing clean water at refugee camps in Jordan. But more innovative WASH partnerships—between companies and NGOs, different funders and NGOs, government organizations, and social entrepreneurs—are necessary to develop collaborative solutions for greater, more effective results.

# What Innovative Solutions Will You Fund?

The Center for Disaster Philanthropy launched the [Global Refugee Crisis Fund](#) to provide funders the opportunity to collectively and more effectively help refugees and internally displaced persons. Gifts to the fund allow you to address both critical, immediate needs as well as the long-term challenges of the ongoing crisis. Leverage your impact on the crisis with a donation to the [Global Refugee Crisis Fund](#).

We can also help you make thoughtful investment decisions in this crisis. Our staff, board, and advisory council bring more than one hundred years of combined experience in disaster management, philanthropy, and nonprofit leadership to you through strategic, one-on-one guidance.

Find out how the Center for Disaster Philanthropy can meet your organization's values and disaster philanthropy objectives.

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