

World Day of Prayer - Development Grant Year 1 Report

Near East Council of Churches (NECC), Antenatal Clinics, Gaza

The NECC Antenatal Clinics work in the Shajaia, Darraj, and Rafah districts of Gaza. They bring help that would not come from any other source. Embrace the Middle East remains most grateful to the World Day of Prayer's for its generous award of a Five-Year Development Grant. Each annual £5,000 donation helps to meet the cost of doctors, nurses and medical supplies for this vital project.

Context

Gaza continues to suffer the effects of the ongoing blockade, despite recently increasing the number of permits for workers to enter Israel and the expansion of the fishing zone to its full distance. Resources to rebuild damaged buildings and roads from the May conflict have been slow to arrive and subject to restrictions, and the long-promised Qatari aid funds were delayed. Hamas and the other factions in Gaza reinstated border protests in September resulting in fatalities on both sides and exchange in rocket fire between Gaza and the Israeli Defence Forces has also been seen in September.

Nutritional problems remain prevalent in Gaza due to the deteriorating economic and social situation. The NECC health program is contributing to reducing this prevalence particularly among Palestinian women and children through education and awareness as well as medical interventions and it is therefore very important to continue implementing such a programme in the future.



The NECC continued to face challenges due to Covid-19 throughout the last year, and they continued to use measures to keep staff and patients safe. As well as staff wearing PPE and carrying out safe hygiene practices, they are also using a booking system for patients, reducing waiting time in the clinics and changing the flow of patients to avoid beneficiaries with no medical

conditions coming into contact with those that do. NECC also continued to provide online E-health and psychological counselling through a free hotline service.

As a result of the conflict in May 2021, the NECC now has the additional burden of coping with limited power supply and destroyed infrastructure (including the only lab for processing Covid tests), however the NECC is resilient and responding to the needs of communities.



During the first half of 2021, at the NECC Antenatal clinics, 1,761 new pregnant women were registered and received appropriate antenatal services (the annual target is 2,000). The number of women who were already registered and followed up during the reporting period was 2,359, with a total number of 5,379 antenatal care visits.

The number of pregnant women who were found to be anaemic was 826 out of 1,241 who were examined (66.5%). They were all enrolled into treatment programmes. 49.3% of anaemic pregnant women improved or recovered fully.

619 pregnant women received folic acid during the first trimester of pregnancy to help prevent their babies from having congenital anomalies.

99% of women made it through the pregnancy, delivery and post-natal period without any related complications, and the percentage of infants born with congenital diseases reported at the NECC clinics has decreased.

In addition, the NECC carried out health education and awareness sessions. Health education sessions were conducted to 1,733 caregivers (the annual target is 2,500) on nutrition, hygiene, danger signs of pregnancy, postnatal care, and breastfeeding. There was a 36.5% improvement in the knowledge of pregnant women (the target was 30%).



NECC are also always keen to improve their staff capacity, so 25 staff members participated in 11 training days, some through Zoom. Training topics included

preconception care, reproductive health, COVID-19 preventive procedures and responding to Covid-19, and vaccinations.

Case Study

Raghad, age 32, lives with her husband and children in her husband's family home. There are ten people living in the house, which is very small, in the Rafah neighbourhood. Raghad came to the NECC clinic after a relative recommended it to her, as she was having difficulties conceiving. She was given advice regarding exercise, diet, including reducing certain foods and was recommended to follow a diet containing fruit and vegetables, vitamins and protein. In addition, she was given folic acid to take before pregnancy and told its importance in preventing birth defects and anaemia.

Raghad said "the project provided me proper care, and gave me the needed medicines, also followed me regularly, and assured me about my health status. I am very pleased with the knowledge I have gained from the program. I can't picture Rafah area without NECC clinics, as I can't predict what will happen to our children, mothers, and family's health future within these harsh situations. I am very grateful for the care that I have received and sincerely thank the NECC clinic and the staff for their kindness, and concerns about our health."

Embrace the Middle East is extremely grateful to the World Day of Prayer for their long-term support for this important health programme.
