

Buckner and TBM provide hope to Yazidis in Kurdistan

October 22, 2015

[Buckner International](#) and [Texas Baptist Men](#) provided more than 6,700 pairs of shoes, along with children's clothing and infant-care products, to Yazidi refugees on Mount Sinjar.



A child from a refugee camp in northern Iraq receives a new pair of shoes, thanks to Buckner International and Texas Baptist Men. Some associate the mountain with the place where Noah's ark is believed to have rested after the biblical flood. For the Yazidis, it's awash with the struggles of living in fear of the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL.

More than a year ago, ISIS attacked the Yazidis, taking control of Iraq's Sinjar province, killing nearly 3,000 people and abducting 5,000 women and children. Thousands fled, including those who [sought safety on Mount Sinjar](#). There, many Yazidis struggle in refugee camps with little food, water or supplies.

Buckner International and Texas Baptist Men worked through a Christian humanitarian aid worker serving in northern Iraq to send clothing, diapers and medical equipment, along with more than 6,700 pairs of shoes collected through Buckner Shoes for Orphan Souls campaign.

Gary Smith, a layman at [Brookhaven Church in McKinney](#), spearheaded TBM involvement in collecting items for northern Iraq, as well as getting the container loaded and shipped.



Buckner International and Texas Baptist Men worked through a Christian humanitarian aid worker serving in northern Iraq to send clothing, diapers and medical equipment, along with more than 6,700 pairs of shoes. “Our original request was for diapers and child-care items, but it just took off,” Smith said. “God saw something bigger than we ever envisioned.”

TBM packed a 40-foot shipping container with about 100 wheelchairs, diapers, children's clothing, and arts and crafts items, along with the shoes Buckner provided.

The worker in Iraq, whose name and precise location are withheld for security reasons, recently delivered the aid as a ray of hope for hurting people. She distributed the supplies in three locations where she has established relationships, ensuring the supplies would reach the people who needed them most.

Serving in such an unstable area, getting supplies to the region and distributing them is harrowing. In one camp, planes flew overhead, striking a nearby city four times.

The Yazidis were grateful for the help, the aid worker said. The people lacked water for bathing. Often, they were tired and worn down.

"Refugee camps do the best they can, but they're crowded," she said. "To say the distribution from Buckner Shoes for Orphan Souls and Texas Baptist Men was a Godsend would be an understatement."

The aid worker grew emotional when she described her interactions with the refugees.

"I still tear up when I think about the older man who came up to me during a distribution. 'Please do not forget us,' he said. 'They have taken our women and children. We do not have much food, water or supplies. We still need help. Please tell the people we need help.'"



“He was older, rugged and tattered, wearing worn-out shoes. He wanted one thing, not for himself, but for his people: ‘Please do not forget.’”

The supplies offered reminders Christians have not forgotten the Yazidis, the aid worker said. The items let people know others care about them.

“They have had a touch, a blessing from thousands of (Christians) who gave, not knowing who would get their shoes but gave because they love” Jesus, she said. “I am so thankful I had the opportunity to give these shoes to ‘the least of these.’ I have been to a lot of places and have done a lot of distributions, but this one was one of the most memorable ones I have participated in.”

Matt Asato, senior director of ministry engagement with Buckner, offered thanks for an open door to help people struggling in such a difficult situation.

“We are grateful for the opportunity to be able to contribute humanitarian aid in places that seem hard to reach, such as Iraq,” he said.

“Most people think they cannot do something because they see horrible stuff in the media in faraway places. The truth is that everyone who donated shoes through Buckner Shoes for Orphan Souls demonstrated God’s love and provided hope and a smile for these families to fight another day in the midst of darkness.”

The aid worker thanked all the people who donated items to help the hurting in northern Iraq. Their willingness to pray for others and give of their own resources had a tremendous impact.



“Without my prayer support back home, I would not have endured it so well,” she said. “I had such peace, even during the airstrikes. That peace only comes from God. I am so grateful to all who participated with me, even though they were not physically there, I knew they were lifting me up and the situation up in prayer.”

After the initial container filled with supplies arrived in Iraq, TBM continued to receive donations. Smith hopes to send a second shipping container to Iraq soon, filled with heavy blankets, coats, winter boots and medical supplies.

Information provided by Buckner International communications staff, with additional reporting by Managing Editor Ken Camp