

BRINGING LIFESAVING HEALTHCARE TO FLOOD-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES IN LIBYA

A CLOSER LOOK



Talal Burnaz, IMC Country Director in Libya, surveys the damage in Derna in September 2023.
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On 10 September 2023, Storm Daniel struck Libya, bringing winds of up to 80 kilometres per hour and record-breaking rainfall. The next day, two dams upstream from the city of Derna collapsed, causing catastrophic flooding that destroyed approximately 25% of the city and displaced nearly 45,000 people. A portion of these internally displaced persons (IDPs) still reside in precarious conditions, giving rise to heightened protection risks and increased vulnerabilities. One of the most pressing concerns has been access to clean water. Without it, waterborne diseases can spread, leading to illness and potentially death.

To address this, International Medical Corps (IMC) contracted a fleet of specially equipped trucks to deliver safe drinking water directly to flood-affected communities across the Derna region. These water-truck tanks undergo rigorous water-quality monitoring at the water sources and during transportation. Each truck is capable of transporting 12,000 litres of water. So far, we have delivered about 7.5 million litres of clean water via 928 water trucks, providing relief to about 15,500 people.

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The disaster caused infrastructure damage and shortages in medical equipment, medications, and staff, exacerbating the already limited capabilities of health facilities in the region. To meet these challenges, International Medical Corps has deployed 12 emergency medical teams (EMTs) over the course of its response, including some in fixed placements and some mobile units that have operated out of 31 health facilities, bringing lifesaving health services to thousands of displaced people. The organisation currently has 11 EMTs in place—three in fixed locations and eight mobile units that provide services to 25 health facilities across eight municipalities.

“When I arrived in Derna after the floods, the damage I saw was devastating,” explained Talal Burnaz, IMC’s Country Director in Libya. “Buildings were destroyed, thousands were displaced. It was unimaginable. Our EMTs have been critical in providing care to those who need it most. It is why we are here—to help.”



IMC staff members install the water tank near Ahmed’s house in February 2024.

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Our teams provide an integrated package of emergency and primary healthcare services, including reproductive health, child health, mental health care, prevention of and response to gender-based violence, health education sessions, training, and medication distribution. So far, our 12 EMTs have completed more than 21,000 outpatient consultations with IDPs from flood-affected areas.

HELPING AHMED AND HIS SON ACCESS SAFE WATER IN DERNA

Ahmed¹ is a father who lost several family members in the flood, including his wife and two of his children. Now, he lives with his only son. Ahmed lived in a temporary accommodation that did not have access to water, forcing them to buy costly water bottles. He and his son struggled with minimal water use and had concerns about their hygiene.

“We could not use the house bathroom for almost 15 days,” Ahmed explained. “We fully relied on water bottles.”

International Medical Corps recognised the critical need to provide access to safe water in Derna. In addition to launching a water trucking program, we installed 32 water tanks across the city, each with a capacity of 2,000 litres. IMC initially focused on the Alshail area in Derna, where Ahmed lives, because of the area’s poor infrastructure and sanitation crisis. Our team installed a water tank, which now gets filled every week, near Ahmed’s house.

“International Medical Corps was the first organisation to help and support me in this,” said Ahmed. “Water is the basis of life, and you gave me that.”

The impact of the water delivery program has gone beyond just delivering water—International Medical Corps has provided a lifeline to countless families, restoring hope and dignity in the face of despair.

IMC was the first international humanitarian organisation present in Libya after the 2011 conflict began. Since then, it has been providing critical health, nutrition, protection, mental health care and water, sanitation and hygiene services across the country.

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1. Name changed to protect his privacy.