

We're Not the Answer to Other People's Problems. They Are.

preemptivelove.org/blog/not-answer-peoples-problems/

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It's one of the hardest, most important, and most rewarding lessons we've learned in our ten years of living and serving in the Middle East:

Real peace—lasting, sustainable change—only happens when people are able to own their future.

Love shows up when the bullets fly, when the bombs drop. But then love gets out of the way—because we come to realize that we are not the solution to other people's problems. They are.

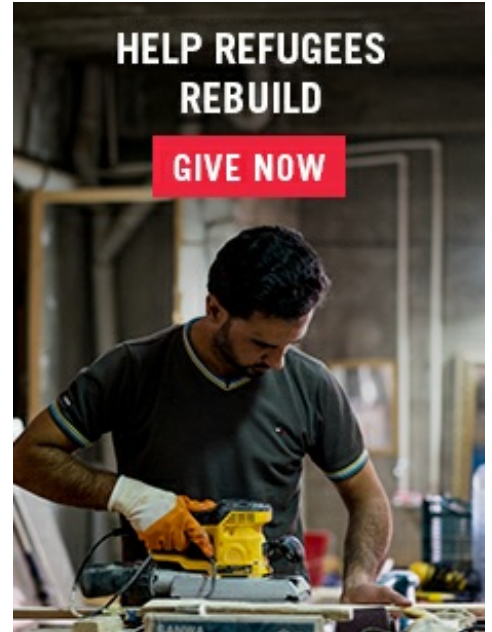
Local problems need local solutions, whether it's the battle against ISIS in Iraq or the refugee crisis in Syria. We can be the conduit, but local people—and local partners—they are the answer. That is why we are a coalition—it is not just our name, it's our organizational model.

So how does this work in real life?

Ten years ago, we started helping Iraqi kids get life-saving heart surgeries—surgeries the local health system was ill-equipped to provide due to years of destabilizing conflict. We weren't the only ones bringing foreign doctors to Iraq. But many outside doctors kept local medical staff at arm's length. Iraqi doctors and nurses were relegated to the sidelines of the operating theater while foreign doctors took the reins.

They saved a lot of lives. But it didn't address the underlying need: making sure Iraq's medical system can give kids in Iraq the care they need, long after the foreign doctors have left.

We settled on a different approach, partnering with foreign and local medical teams to build up Iraq's capacity to provide care. Teams of foreign doctors spend thousands of hours training Iraqi doctors and nurses—and then handed them the reins.





The result? Kids lives are saved in hospitals across Iraq (and now, around the world), long after our teams go home.

By partnering locally, we are collectively able to accomplish much more than we ever could alone.

Then, in 2014, the earth shifted under our feet.



Three years ago, ISIS stormed across Iraq. City after city fell. Our team had to make a decision: Do we leave? Carry on doing the same thing as if nothing had changed? Or do we engage this new crisis unfolding on our doorstep?

We chose to stay and engage. We started going to frontline places like Haditha, Fallujah, and Mosul with life-saving food, water, and medical care for those caught in the middle of the conflict. We started providing jobs and income and empowerment opportunities for those who fled and lost everything.

We could not do this without our Iraqi staff, friends, and local partners. They know the people, places, needs, and solutions far better than anyone else. Just like with our heart surgery programs, we knew that we had to be in this together—with local people and local organizations—if we actually wanted to help.



Today, we work shoulder-to-shoulder with our friends in Iraq and Syria. Not just because it's necessary—but because we believe it's the best way to work. We go into the hard places together. We design our responses and programs together. We empower people together. **When we say “we,” we don't mean white Westerners charging in to “save the day”—we mean all of us together, collectively expanding the work that can be done.**

Everything we do is about building local capacity, investing in local institutions and strengthening communities that will endure well after we are gone.

Our local staff, friends, and partners extend the reach of what we can do in any one place. They get us into places we couldn't reach without their influence. They help us stay longer and do more than we ever could have done by ourselves.



Expanding our coalition expands our reach, and then our impact. Thinking of ourselves as something bigger than our own staff means we can accomplish things that are bigger than ourselves.

You are also an integral part of our coalition, and you too expand our reach exponentially. When you join us—when you live out this idea of preemptive love, when you show hospitality wherever you are, when you show up for those displaced by war by purchasing refugee-made products in our store, running fundraisers, using your voice, or by giving—you build something that will last. You help us work in more than one place at a time. **You become an extension of this movement where you are, even as you help us to invest in and through local partners where we are.**

We depend on you to make our work possible, and we depend on our local partners to help us know how to use those resources most effectively. That is our coalition. **That is how all of us—you, our staff at Preemptive Love, and our local partners—create the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible.**

We are a network—a coalition—of people working to unmake violence and remake our world with the hope that someday, this work will no longer be needed.