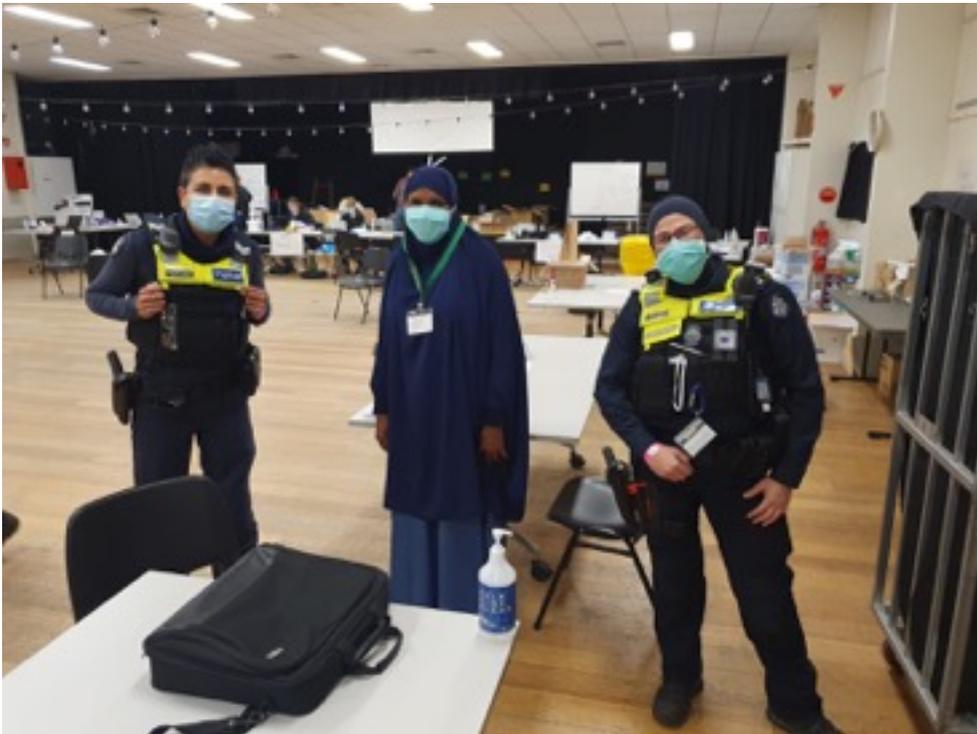


A Warm Thank You

In times of uncertainty things can get scary and *fast*. But it is these times that the good in human beings is amplified. This sentiment has been expressed many times before in many different languages and religions. In Islam, it is, “Verily with hardship comes ease”(Quran 94:5-6), in Christianity it is, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”(John 1:5)

The past fortnight has been a trying one, a surge in a deadly virus that threatens us all. Old, young, weak, strong, it does not discriminate. When the government announced a “hard lockdown” for nine public housing towers across North Melbourne, Flemington and Kensington, the communities that make up those buildings faced something unprecedented. Not only was the virus a direct threat to them, but the unanswered questions, the desperate attempts to contact those in charge and how to access basic necessities like food, hygiene products and medicine caused great anxiety.



Fartun assisting with translation and coordinating residents’ getting tested.

What followed was the collective effort of community organisations from all religious and cultural backgrounds rallying to support the residents in the towers. Representatives of Christian denominations, the Sikh community and the Australian Muslim community opened their doors and their hearts for all. The multicultural Australian communities came together to support and lend a hand. Most importantly, the doors of the Mosque of the Australian Muslim Services Agency – closely located to the towers – were opened to provide a community workplace and hub.

The East African Women’s Foundation, chaired by Fartun Farah, played a special role. We at EAWF engage with the most vulnerable in the Somali community; the elderly, single mothers and their children. We did the best we could, but soon funds dried up. We made a public call for donations

and donations came. The Sisters of Mercy, a Catholic group mobilised the greatest response and sent us what they could, which was so much more than we expected. With their donations, the Sisters sent beautiful cards of encouragement and gratitude for the work we were doing.



Fartun delivering food outside the apartment block of a young single mother.

Fartun Farah has always had a connection with the Catholic community. As a teenager in Somalia, Fartun met an Italian Catholic nun, Luciana, who taught her how to sew. Fartun went on to use this skill to become a seamstress. When the Somali Civil War broke out, Luciana and Fartun were separated. It was only when Fartun found her way to a refugee camp in Kenya that she was reunited with Luciana. They were both overcome with emotion when they saw each other again. The odds that they had made it were astronomical and the fact that they were embracing again was surreal. Fartun recalls Luciana saying, "I can't believe God has reunited us." It was a special moment that Fartun has always cherished. Luciana eventually went back to Italy and Fartun to Australia.

When Fartun Farah came to Australia, a refugee and a single mother of five children she was welcomed and supported by the Mercy Refugee Services and other members of the Catholic community in Launceston, Tasmania. She was connected to Catholic nuns once more. From 1998 to 2020, Fartun has remained very close to the Catholic Sisters and members of the Catholic community who helped us then and have never stopped helping us.

The generous donations allow us to continue providing food and other necessities to the residents of the towers. It didn't stop there. Through one of our contacts at the Catholic Social Services Victoria, we received a donation from The Sisters of St John of God in Western Australia. This was a significant donation. We are excited to be able to put this money toward the children who do not have ac-

cess to technology support and learning materials, as the school term resumes. We will continue to provide more food packages with a focus on single parent families.

This pandemic is hitting Melbournians especially hard, but, in the hardship we feel the deepest gratitude for the generosity of the community. The importance of charity and importance of gratitude must never leave each other. The East African Women's foundation says thank you to the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of St. John of God. And thank you to all the individuals who donated to our organisation.

God Bless,

The East African Women's Foundation



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