



# Appetite for change

In this exclusive interview, **Her Royal Highness Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein**, wife of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, speaks to *Vision* about the challenges faced by increasingly strained global healthcare systems and the need for hunger relief to curb an unprecedentedly severe refugee crisis

the recurring drought in the Horn of Africa, civil unrest in Afghanistan and Darfur, and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Also, IHC has been heavily engaged in the emergency responses to Syria and the Philippines.

Additionally, in the following interview, Her Royal Highness Princess Haya, in Her capacity as Chairperson of Dubai Healthcare City Authority, tells *Vision* about the challenges faced by today's healthcare systems, including ageing demographic patterns and rising populations. She also highlights how these challenges can be met, as well as how the development of a robust healthcare infrastructure can provide better care to populations around the world.

**Q. This year you were honoured with the World Food Programme's Hunger Hero Award. How important was this recognition in terms of raising awareness of hunger worldwide?**

**A.** *I was deeply grateful to the United Nations and the World Food Programme (WFP) for recognising through me, and the efforts of my late parents, His Majesty King Hussein and Her Majesty Queen Alia, and the efforts of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and the IHC, the massive impact of the UAE as a donor country, and I accepted the award on their behalf. Once again, I would like to say that the only heroes in the world are the people who are hungry. And, so long as the problem exists, I think that those are the people that we should always recognise.*

*Under the Millennium Development Goals, hunger was one of the areas where we failed. There are still nearly 800 million hungry people. Yes, we reduced the proportion of people without adequate food because the* ➤

**U**nited Nations Messenger of Peace Her Royal Highness Princess Haya was this year awarded the World Food Programme Hunger Hero Award. She has engaged in myriad humanitarian activities, including founding Tkiyet Um Ali, an NGO dedicated to hunger relief in her native Jordan, through which She is actively helping to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals on hunger.

She is also the Chairperson of Dubai's International Humanitarian City (IHC), which was founded by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum in 2003, and is today the world's largest and busiest logistics hub for humanitarian aid. The IHC's capabilities and strategic location – within eight hours by air to two-thirds of the world's population – have helped deliver assistance to some of the worst humanitarian crises of the past decade, including the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia,



**01** HRH Princess Haya works tirelessly to champion health and humanitarian causes



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global population continues to rise, but we made little headway in cutting the numbers affected. Part of the problem was higher food prices after 2008. Thankfully, they have begun to come down, but we need to do more to help poor people feed themselves and, in particular, to prevent malnutrition among young children.

**Q How important is education about, and awareness of, food and nutrition in promoting healthy societies?**

**A.** Education is probably the single most important factor in good nutrition in the family. We have to start with mothers during pregnancy and lactation and teach them best practices to keep themselves healthy, and their babies well nourished. Good nutrition is not just a matter of balanced food intake. Safe water is also crucial and mothers need to know how to avoid the diarrheal diseases that are so dangerous for babies, and what to do when they occur. The first 1,000 days of life are the most critical when it comes to nutrition. If babies are deprived of major nutrients such as Vitamin A, iron or iodine at this early stage, they can be damaged for life.

**Q. Your NGO Tkiyet Um Ali (TUA) serves as a model for hunger relief across the Arab world. What have been the programme's proudest achievements and in what ways is it developing to meet new challenges?**

**A.** Every single achievement that Tkiyet Um Ali (TUA) can be proud of has only been reached thanks to our donors. First and foremost, I need to thank His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum because throughout the years he has helped me to

completely subsidise the administration costs, and that has been the reason for the success of TUA. The result is simple. Every donor knows that the donation they make does not pay for administration, or any other associated cost, and that is what gives TUA its reputation. The donations made by Jordanians, and people all around the world, are given directly to the hungry.

I am also very proud of the bravery of His Majesty King Abdullah, because he is one of the only rulers, I should say in the Middle East, in fact one of the few in the world, that allows an organisation like TUA to function in a transparent way. It is never easy for a country to admit that it has hunger issues, and he chooses to face hunger just as he does every other problem, with a gutsy resolve to solve it.

TUA has an anti-hunger campaign for Jordanians by Jordanians. We have a wonderful Jordanian donor base and a huge number of volunteers. We have done four years of research pinpointing Jordan's hunger hotspots, and interviewing families to assess their needs, and we are aware of the other help that they may be receiving. This type of personalised attention allows us to approach the issue of hunger in a very focused way, and gives the terrible problem a very individual and a very human face that promises a dignified solution.

Finally, the way TUA staff and Jordanians responded to the Israeli bombardment of Gaza last summer in a way that helped to feed nearly 300,000 people trapped in shelters. TUA worked as a partner in the network, shoulder to shoulder with many other NGOs, and proved once again that it could deliver regionally.

One of the key facilitators of the Gaza conflict relief effort was His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who gave us orders in the International Humanitarian City (IHC) of Dubai to create an air bridge, which allowed the airlift of supplies from Dubai of tents, food and medicine, and because of this facility and the intervention of HM King Abdullah and the Jordanian Armed Forces, TUA and other NGOs were able to deliver aid to the people of Gaza. As long as hunger exists, no NGO should be able to cite proud achievements. I don't believe in singling out one NGO above another. Helping people is all about working as a team. That's the only way the job gets done.

*Food poverty worldwide: the facts*

**842M**

people worldwide do not have access to enough food to eat

**98%**

of them live in the developing world

**5M**

malnutrition deaths among children below the age of five years each year



*‘Personalised attention allows us to approach the issue of hunger in a very focused way, and gives the terrible problem a very individual and a very human face that promises a dignified solution’*

**Q. In what ways are international crises compounding issues related to health and nutrition, and how is Dubai’s International Humanitarian City helping to tackle those challenges?**

**A.** *We have more refugees and internally displaced people today than at any time in history and most of those people need food assistance. The most striking challenge is Syria, with millions of Syrians fleeing to Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan. This is a huge strain on international humanitarian aid. Dubai’s International Humanitarian City moved quickly to help aid agencies in coping with Syria and other major crises – in some ways it is a first line of defence. It is a critical logistical centre for the aid supplies of the UN and major NGOs, but also brings together aid actors to coordinate, evaluate and plan for the future. The UN is extremely pleased with the IHC and His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum’s leadership in creating*

*and building it. We hope to see it expand further in the future.*

**Q. As Chairperson of Dubai Healthcare City Authority, can you share your thoughts on the challenges faced by today’s healthcare system, including ageing demographic patterns and, in some parts of the world (including the Middle East), rising populations?**

**A.** *Over the last half-century, life expectancy in the industrialised world has risen dramatically – and so has the healthcare bill. Although this should be celebrated, unfortunately most people attribute the increase in healthcare spending directly to population ageing. While it is true that ageing does affect health spending, there are other more important factors that affect healthcare spending in a more significant way. It is argued that the real culprits of rising costs are the failures in insurance markets and technological >*



- 01** HRH Princess Haya during a WFP visit to Kenya to encourage a response to crippling food shortages
- 02** Visiting a young patient at a British pediatrics ward





01 HRH Princess Haya is a respected speaker on global healthcare issues

*progress in medicine combined with a secular rise in income, and distorted incentives in reimbursing both patients and doctors. Blaming population ageing distracts from the decisions that really ought to be made, such as devising appropriate incentives for curbing excessive provision of publicly financed healthcare and evaluating the social value of new medical technologies. The message we need to send is that living longer should not be a burden on healthcare as long as preventative measures are implemented, and other factors that affect cost, such as drugs and new technologies, are controlled.*


**Q. How can these challenges be met and what is the key to development of a robust healthcare infrastructure that can deliver efficient, effective care to entire populations?**

**A.** *The best measure of a health system's performance is its impact on health outcomes. International consensus is growing: without urgent improvements in the performance of health systems, the world will fail to meet the health-related goals. As health systems are highly context-specific, there is no single set of best practices that can be put forward as a model for improved performance. But health systems that function well have certain shared characteristics. They have procurement and distribution systems that actually deliver interventions to those in need. They are staffed with sufficient health workers having the right skills and motivation. And they operate with financing systems that are*

*sustainable, inclusive and fair. The costs of healthcare should not force impoverished households even deeper into poverty.*

*Countries at different levels of development look for different ways to improve their health systems' performance, based on their stage of development and need. All countries should be interested in exchanging ideas and experiences, conducting more research, getting wider international exposure for important domestic agendas (such as patient safety or the health of indigenous populations); and developing norms and standards for measuring performance. For example, in terms of research, here at Dubai Healthcare City, we have partnered with Harvard Medical School to establish the Harvard Medical School Center for Global Health Delivery – Dubai, to promote research that optimises the 'last mile' of healthcare delivery and to build local and regional capacity for high-quality health delivery research.*

**Q. You are a vocal supporter of seeing the world through the patient's eye. How important is patient-centred care?**

**A.** *Patient-centred care aims to ensure individuals are an equal partner in their healthcare. The individual and the health system benefit because the individual experiences greater satisfaction with their care and the health system is more cost-effective. Patient-centredness is a widely used but poorly understood concept in medical practice. It is most commonly understood for what it is not: technology-centred, doctor-centred, hospital-centred or disease-centred. Patient-centred care aims to put the patient first – their needs and wishes given centre stage when making important decisions about healthcare. Adopted properly, it should encourage a partnership between the patient and healthcare providers where the patient's needs are met, and at the same time, he or she is asked to take care of their own health by adopting a more preventative and healthy lifestyle, thus promoting wellbeing. Fundamental to successful patient-centred care is education. We must educate our patients so they can make informed decisions which promote wellbeing and good health. This will lead to greater satisfaction and, at the same time, reduce healthcare costs.* 



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## *HRH Princess Haya: Her life as a humanitarian*

**HRH Princess Haya has a strong humanitarian presence at regional and international levels, with a focus on human development, health, education, youth and sports.**

### United Nations

The United Nations Messenger of Peace is the highest honour bestowed on a global citizen by the UN Secretary-General for raising awareness and support for efforts to address poverty, hunger and other pressing problems. HRH Princess Haya was named a Messenger of Peace by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in 2007 in recognition of Her long involvement in hunger and poverty alleviation.

### International Humanitarian City

HRH Princess Haya chairs the Board of Directors of Dubai's International Humanitarian City, a global humanitarian hub that facilitates aid efforts by providing local and international humanitarian actors with facilities specifically geared to their needs. Non-religious, non-political and not-for-profit, the independent free zone provides a secure environment that fosters partnerships and social responsibility.

### Tkiyet Um Ali

The first initiative of its kind in Jordan and in the Arab World, Tkiyet Um Ali was founded by HRH Princess Haya in 2003, in honour of Her mother, HM the late Queen Alia. It provides food and services to the less privileged sectors of Jordanian society, and serves as a model for hunger and relief initiatives across the entire Arab world.



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*'The first 1,000 days of life are the most critical when it comes to child nutrition'*

### World Food Programme

The World Food Programme is the world's largest humanitarian organisation fighting global hunger. HRH Princess Haya became a Goodwill Ambassador for the WFP in 2007. She gave up the position when She became a UN Messenger of Peace in 2007, but continues to work closely with WFP and was this year recognised as the organisation's Hunger Hero.



- 01** HRH Princess Haya during a field trip to Cambodia
- 02** UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appoints HRH Princess Haya as UN Messenger of Peace
- 03** HRH Princess Haya travels to Haiti with relief supplies, and brings evacuees home to the Middle East