

Dear friends,

Taking care of the physical, medical and psychosocial needs of the children in the Holy Land is essential for Caritas Jerusalem. It is our task to see children stay out of harm's way during the constant conflicts that are ongoing in the Middle East in general and in the Holy Land in particular.

This month we were able to renovate a playground in Jerusalem; raise health awareness at schools in Aboud and improve the physical wellbeing of anaemic children in Gaza.

We are truly thankful to our partners and our extended Caritas family in supporting us in giving hope to the people who most need it. We cannot do what we do without the support of friends like you.

Fr. Raed Abusahlia
General Director
Caritas Jerusalem

Caritas Jerusalem replaced the dilapidated and unsafe playground into somewhere amazing to play



Outdoor recreation is recognized by early childhood educators as a critical foundation for the future learning of our young children. More than just a place to play, playgrounds also support physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of our young children. In the old city of Jerusalem space is very limited; young children continuously cause nuisance with their ball games to the residents of the area by playing football so close to the houses. Then there is the question of road safety. Cars have to swerve to avoid the kids who put their lives at risk.



Before

After

The playground in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem needed upgrades and safety improvements for playground related injuries occurred frequently, as a result children often travel to other places in order to play and avoid the one that they have in their neighbourhood.

As of the beginning of the month, the underground pipes have been installed and four workers from Mondo company in Italy were sent to install the artificial grass that was brought all the way from Italy.



“It was no easy task to bring in all these equipments and materials from the harbour in Haifa, North of Israel to Jerusalem then getting them to the Old City by small trucks; it needed a lot of coordination and logistical cooperation but I am content that the children have a safe place to play and enjoy. This playground will serve them for many decades to come.” Stated Fr. Raed Abusahlia, the General Director of Caritas Jerusalem.

The Peace and Friendship Playground will be open to all the children because it is the only green playground inside the Old City.

We believe Sport for Peace is very important because if children play together they will be able to make peace and learn to live together.

Currently, we are waiting for some Italian athletes to come and officially inaugurate the opening of the playground.

Caritas Jerusalem would like to take this opportunity to thank the Assist for Peace who started this initiative, the Mondo Company, Mr. Luca Scolari, Don Angelo Nigro, Fr. Norayr Kazazian and many others who saved no efforts in making our ambitious plan a reality.

Take charge of your health

One of the most important ways Caritas Jerusalem’s health department helps people improve their health is by educating them on maintaining a healthy lifestyle.



Health awareness sessions were implemented by Caritas Jerusalem’s health department team in Aboud area in five local schools. These sessions were conducted to discuss several issues about health and healthy behaviors using worksheets, videos, stories and practical activities.



During the month we reached 1,078 elementary students and some of their parents.

Moreover, Oral health campaign was conducted for four days in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education about the prevention of dental diseases. In addition, our dentist has screened the

dental health of 370 students in two schools and referred those who need further treatments to our medical center in Aboud.



We would like to take this opportunity to thank Caritas New Zealand for funding this project and their generous support to the people we serve.

All our children need psychosocial help

“Today we learned the importance of calcium in children’s diet so their bones and teeth will be strong.” “Yes, and which foods have calcium, and the importance of fresh vegetables.” “He loves the biscuits and drinks the milk but he did not like the chocolate flavour very much.” “One of my children was included in Caritas programme. I did not know he was anaemic but he was and now he is better, but what about the others?” “She’s stronger!”. “All children in our area need psychosocial help. We see the difference in those in the Caritas programme. Please extend the psychosocial programme to all our children?” “This project will end soon. What then? Will you have another project for the children not included in this one?”

These are samples of spontaneous feedback on the post war recovery project for anaemic children from

parents and local community workers.

Initial screening for thousands of children aged 5 to 12 years is completed and most of those needing iron have finished their treatment and had their blood re-tested. Some post-testing is yet to be done for those still taking iron. These weeks we are concentrating on the educational component of the project and our staff are delivering lectures and leading discussions on health, food and nutrition. Children aged 7 and younger come with a parent or carer but the classes are designed to be suitable for under 12s so older children can come unaccompanied and attendance is very high. The children enjoy the classes, aided no doubt by the fortified milk and biscuits that follow.



Earlier this week I visited a centre in East Rafah where our staff were conducting a lively session with about 20 mothers and a few children. These mothers were not passive recipients of information. They were interested and engaged, they commented, asked questions and shared experiences. Our staff were well prepared having recently participated in training seminars led by Caritas consultant physician and nutritionist. Their charts and power point presentations were clear and appropriate and they dealt with the barrage of questions and

comments in a professional and relaxed manner. The atmosphere in the room was alive and energising and I thought again, as I so often do, how amazing are the women of Gaza! Most of the time they manage to transcend the poverty and deprivation of life here and present a positive and confident face to the world.



On our way home we visited a family where four of their five children have severe mental and physical developmental problems. A guest of Caritas met them some time ago and sent a donation to help them. We listened to their needs and returned the following day with a substantial basket of food and other items. The smiles on the parents' faces made me thank God for Caritas and for the wonderful people who in so many different ways enable us to help the poorest of the poor in Gaza.

Sr Bridget Tighe FMDM

Meeting About the Catholic Identity of Caritas in Rome 14-15 April 2016



Fr. Raed Abusahlia, General Director of Caritas Jerusalem participated at the meeting of the Catholic Identity of Caritas representing Mona region along with representatives from all the other regions of the world.

This Committee was set up by the REPCO to accompany the implementation of Strategic Orientation one of the CI Strategic Framework: *“Caritas at the heart of the Church: Upholding the Catholic identity of Caritas as an essential service of the Church to the poor”*.

The Caritas Catholic Identity Committee will accompany the implementation of the Confederation operational plan for the strategic orientation n°1 for the period 16-19. It will help to articulate what it means to be a Church organization and will develop, collect, disseminate and share tools and materials for awareness building, training and induction of those involved in the social pastoral ministry of the Church at all levels.

In that sense, the Committee will focus on:

1. Accompanying and facilitating reflection on Caritas theology and Catholic Social Teaching:
 - Raising awareness and making explicit Caritas sources and resources : Holy Scriptures (connection between Jesus' message and Caritas' mission (Mt 25), Church's documents, theological reflections, etc.
 - Focusing on the link between *Kerygma/ martyria, liturgia* and *diakonia*.
2. Promoting the Catholic identity of Caritas Internationalis and its members:
 - Underlining the fundamental values of the Gospel and the Church: love and option for the poor, responsible use of resources, simple lifestyle, fraternal cooperation, communion, mutual support, coordination, openness to non-Catholic organizations and communities, etc.
 - Providing inputs, feedbacks and review on CI statements linking them to our sources.

The Committee decided to put together the elements for a booklet and to have a first draft by the end of June 2016. A team will work on this. It's composed of: Pierre, Aloysius, Sebastian and Sister Rosanne.

Dominic Verhoeven of Caritas Belgium and representative of Caritas Europe was unanimously elected as chairperson of the Catholic Identity Committee. We thank him for accepting this task and we commit ourselves to supporting him.

The Installation of a Meteorological Station in Gethsemane



The project “In memory of the Ambient” which has the objective to conserve the eight historical olive trees in the garden of Gethsemane, completed the installation of an Environmental Meteorological Station at the top of the church in front of the garden and the old walls of Jerusalem. This project is the fruit of the agreement between the Custody of the Holy Land, the Association Growing peace together/ Olive Branch Foundation, the Ximeniano Observatory and Ivalsa Institute and Ibimet from the National Council for research (CNR)



This station will measure the main parameters such as: temperature of the air, humidity, rain, direction and intensity of the wind, solar radiation and the radiation of UVB. The results which are linked through the web will be shared with the Custody of the Holy Land and the main world meteorological stations and will help to maintain and conserve the Gethsemane garden and its olive trees.

Caritas Jerusalem through the work of Fr. Raed Abusahlia and “Olive Branch Foundation” coordinated this project and hosted in our Caritas Betharram Center in Bethlehem all the researchers who came from Italy to install this station.

How can you help?

Support our activities

Your support is essential to provide long-term assistance to our beneficiaries.

Please see below our bank details to make a donation:

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Swift Code: ARABPS 22110
Account number: 457793/0/510 USD
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Branch No: 9110
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