



Ahmad overcomes his fears

Dear friends,

This month Caritas Jerusalem's youth department visited the youth in Spain; the health department continued its work in the Gaza Strip and the Food Security and Livelihoods department empowered hundreds of women throughout Palestine.

These are only some of our activities that we wanted to share with you. As always we thank you all for your support, friendship and accompaniment with us and the people that we serve.

Fr. Raed Abusahlia
General Director
Caritas Jerusalem



Psychosocial support is a necessary element to create a comfortable and safe environment within children and their parents. In Gaza, our psychosocial specialist and facilitators held 233 psychosocial sessions for both children and women. These sessions dealt with ways of facing problems, planning for future, life skills and ways to cope with fear.



Caritas Jerusalem aims to build and improve the self-worth of the most vulnerable especially the children by decreasing their stress through different activities and entertainment games. Through the past months, we have helped 457 children and Ahmad is one of them.



Ahmad is an eleven year old boy from Al -Shuja'iyya who lives with his parents and three siblings. Ahmad was withdrawn, afraid of others, cannot defend himself and he had a constant feeling of inferiority due to the bad economic and social situation of his family.

Ahmad suffers from epilepsy, anemia and physical problems which affect his temper. He started to attend the psychosocial sessions but was very passive and he did not participate in any kind of activities with others. The psychosocial specialist planned individual sessions for him with expressive arts and relaxation activities. As a result, Ahmad managed to overcome his bad temper and started to mingle with other children and gradually became more and more sociable and was able to express his feelings freely with his family and peers.



One of the major reasons also for Ahmad's improvement is the cooperation of his parents with the psychosocial specialist and implementation of the guidelines on how to deal with their child.

This project is implemented by Caritas Jerusalem in partnership with Caritas International Belgium and funded by Belgian Development Cooperation.

Empower the Women, Develop the Nation



In 2015, Caritas Jerusalem launched a project to support the socially disadvantaged and graduates in Palestine; especially empowering women to be educated, to participate in the economic sector and improve their quality of life. In 2016, we were able to train 271 women with sewing and designing skills, beauty therapy, culinary art, graphic design, multimedia and accounting in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho and Ramallah through different centers.



Caritas Jerusalem aims to strength women in the community through teaching them new life skills, enhancing their self-esteem and helping them to be financially independent.

Twenty women from different areas were nominated to have startup project tools such as computers, sewing machines and hair salon supplies to start their own income generating project.



G.H is a very talented young lady from Jerusalem. She has the passion to create short documentary films about historical places, events and famous leaders. She comes from a family with a very low income where the father is the only breadwinner; but she managed to pass the Multimedia course with honors and was granted a laptop.

“This laptop will help me start my own private business and help my family” she said with excitement “It is my number one support; It might help me even to open a small studio. I do appreciate your hard work and I cannot thank you enough.”



Women are considered to be the backbone of every family and their responsibilities do not allow them to be fully committed to work in a traditional workplace; therefore, we have helped some to open small beauty salons in their own houses while others were granted with sewing machines that also allow them to work from home and take care of the family at the same time.



Caritas Jerusalem would like to take this opportunity to thank Caritas Czech Republic and Czech Development Agency for funding this project.



It was planned to be an exchange trip, but it turned up to be much more than that

Young volunteers of Caritas Jerusalem and Beit Jala parish return home after 10 days' work-camp in Spain



“We just feel the Holy Land a little closer to us” Davi, 49 of the Diocesan Caritas of Valencia, in Spain resumes quite simply his impression of the 2016-2017 10 days youth exchange between Palestinian young volunteers from Beit Jala and Spanish youth, in Spain.

From December 26th to January 17th, seven youth from the Annunciation parish in Beit Jala have shared an intense program with Spanish youth in several cities of Spain, as part of the Peace Initiative program.

The camp was the latest of a series of camps which were hosted by the Beit Jala parish, involving a number of Spanish young volunteers over 4 years. Guisep, 26, participated in two of these four camps before receiving the Palestinian youth in his diocese of Valencia. “Throughout these years, we have built a special friendship, based on the solidarity and mutual commitment with peace and justice in Palestine” says Giusep “Part of our commitment has been to witness what we have lived with the Palestinians and what we have seen, here among our people. Now it is very exciting to have our Palestinian friends here”.

Commitment through witnessing

In fact, Giusep is one of dozens of volunteers who, since they have participated in work-camps in Beit Jala, have been giving public presentations and witnesses in Spain about their experiences and learnings in Palestine. This time, it was the Palestinian youth's turn to give their own witnesses themselves. Celina Azar, 18, has participated in the program, through all the 4 camps in her town of Beit Jala, until the camp in Spain. “The camp has been a part of my growing-up and forming my personality. I have learned a lot about my own country and about another culture. I feel now that I am an ambassador of my country, my church and my town”.



The camp included a variety of activities, including voluntarism, learning visits and public meetings. The youth were received in different service centers run by Caritas, dedicated to the help of immigrants, refugees, sick persons, marginalized women and homeless people. For Macareos, 18, “the best part was the voluntary work with the children of the immigrants. We played with them and made them smile. I also appreciated the big number of people who came to hear our witness.

I talked about the Christian community in Palestine, explaining that we are part of the Palestinian people and share its cause for peace and justice. We also are proud to be children of the first church and the land that gave birth to our faith". Elias, 20, says that "the visits to Caritas headquarters in Madrid and Valencia allowed us to understand how big the Caritas movement is and how important charity work is in the church". For Elias, this camp carried new understanding of the reality "I appreciated talking to the refugees outside a Caritas center in Alicante, who came from Algeria and Morocco. We spoke in Arabic, our common language, and felt we had a deep community with them. I realized how suffering of people because of poverty or violence, around the world is linked to each other. It is the problem of all of us!" Mireal Lolás, 20, is already thinking of the next step, after the camp "We did not only deepen our friendship with the Spanish youth, but we also have a lot of ideas that can be applied in our community. This camp motivated us to be much more committed. It was expected to be an exchange camp, but it was much more than that".

Bridges of solidarity

During the camp, the youth were received by the bishop of Valencia, Cardenal Antonio Caziñares, who expressed his welcome to the youth "I have always been very close to the Palestinian people and the church of Palestine. Please know that you can always count on our support and prayers" noted Cardenal Caziñares, who celebrated Holy Mass after the visit, in the Cathedral of Valencia, with the youth, the directors of the camp

and hundreds of believers from the diocese.



According to Beatriz Seara, responsible of Caritas Spain's international cooperation for the Middle East, this program aims at developing the sense of commitment of the youth, engaging them in social service in their communities, as well as building bridges of solidarity and cooperation between youth from different places". The program does not stop at this point, though as Betriz Seara clarifies, "This is a new stage of joint work. The youth of Beit Jala are ready to form a volunteering body of charity in their community. As for the Spanish youth, the work of witnessing and different forms of solidarity with the church of the Holy Land and the Palestinian people, will definitely increase". As for Kassam Maaddi, from the youth department in Caritas Jerusalem, this success is only the first:

"The experiences and lessons of this program, with Beit Jala parish, will serve us to start similar experiences in other parishes.

This is not an end. It is rather a new beginning".

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