During 2020, Caritas Jerusalem expanded and adapted its services in response to the needs of the people due to the Covid pandemic. In Gaza, Caritas Medical Teams sanitized the Holy Family Church (Deir Al-Latini) on a number of occasions. This, combined with other infection control measures, enabled the small Christian community to gather in safety for significant religious services. The teams also sanitised the residential home for children with disabilities run by the Missionaries of Charity located within the Church compound.
At this moment in history, marked by the ecological crisis and grave economic and social imbalances only worsened by the coronavirus pandemic, it is all the more important for us to acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters. God has made this fraternal unity possible, by giving us his Son Jesus. The fraternity he offers us has nothing to do with fine words, abstract ideals or vague sentiments. It is a fraternity grounded in genuine love, making it possible for me to encounter others different from myself, feeling com-passion for their sufferings, drawing near to them and caring for them even though they do not belong to my family, my ethnic group or my religion. For all their differences, they are still my brothers and sisters. The same thing is true of relationships between peoples and nations: brothers and sisters all!

"URBI ET ORBI" MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS CHRISTMAS 2020
Echoing Charles Dickens’ introduction to A Tale of Two Cities “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times…. it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair”, the Corona pandemic evoked sentiments of near despair and extraordinary generosity. 2020 will be remembered for the rapid spread of the Corona virus across the world causing immense suffering, death, loss of income, poverty, physical and psychological stress, yet that very crisis evoked in people of all ages and backgrounds an outpouring of generosity, commitment and resilience. Images of the closed shops and empty streets of Bethlehem and the Old City of Jerusalem will remain with me for a long time, but equally engraved on my heart and mind are the immediate response of our partners and donors with funds for humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable, the commitment of Caritas staff and youth volunteers who distributed food and hygiene parcels, food coupons and educational toys, despite long hours of work and difficulty of travel, and organisations and individuals who donated food and other items for our elderly housebound in Ramallah.

Throughout the year as you will read in this Report we delivered humanitarian aid to thousands of people across the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza, and emergency health care and education in infection control throughout the Gaza Strip. These many projects enabled us to give employment to a greater number of people, while we continued our medical, social and development interventions when it was possible to travel.

The 2020 “URBI ET ORBI” message of Pope Francis (paraphrased) encapsulates the practical expression of the vision and mission of Caritas Jerusalem, Caritas Members worldwide, and you our partners and friends:

Caritas has nothing to do with fine words, abstract ideals or vague sentiments. It is a familial organisation grounded in genuine love, making it possible for us to encounter others different from ourselves, feeling compassion for their sufferings, drawing near to them and caring for them even though they do not belong to our family, ethnic group or religion. For all their differences, they are still our brothers and sisters.

Sr. Bridget Tighe FMDM
Secretary General

A meeting of Caritas Jerusalem Board of Directors took place in our Jerusalem headquarters on 9th September 2020, presided over by our President, His Beatitude Pierbattista Pizzaballa, then Apostolic Administrator. Due to appointments of new Bishops the Board had not met for some time so this meeting was particularly significant.

The Board appointed a newly constituted Executive Committee with combined expertise in social ministry, finance, law, organizational leadership and administration and a Chaplain Ex Officio Member.

Our up-dated Statutes previously approved by the Board for one year, were approved with minor adjustments for a further six months. These decisions by the Board marked important milestones in the life of Caritas Jerusalem and we thank the Members for their support and encouragement.

The ORDP launched in March 2019 was due to be completed by mid-2020. On 17th February the revised Organizational Structure, with Manuals and Procedures still in process of development, were presented by the consultant and members of his team to Jerusalem and West Bank staff at a workshop in Ramallah. A few days later they travelled to Gaza and presented the same material to the Gaza staff. There was a sense of achievement and enthusiasm among the staff who now looked forward to Phase 4, re-engineering, the final section of the ORDP that includes updating our Manuals, Policies and Procedures, staff training and capacity building, and upgrading our information and communication technologies.

In our new organizational structure, there are three Departments: Socio-Pastoral, Health and Emergency and Development, supported by Finance and Admin, Fundraising and CIMS Compliance, Communication and Safeguarding.
SOCIO-PASTORAL DEPARTMENT

This newly formed department combines the former social and youth departments and continues our mission to provide pastoral and humanitarian aid to the youth and the elderly, the poor and the marginalized. This department has great potential to develop and expand the service of Caritas Jerusalem to the local Church and society.

Examples of activities of this department during 2020 include care of senior citizens in our Elderly Day Care Centre, Christmas gifts prepared by Christian and Muslim children in the West Bank for poorer Christian children in Gaza, and hours of voluntary work by our Youth volunteers in parishes and in response to the Covid pandemic. During the year we provided humanitarian aid to poor families, helping them financially and coordinating with other organizations to cover expensive medical bills.

Staff of this department manage a Family-to-Family sponsorship project that supports 100 families in the Gaza Strip and a resettlement programme for people, mostly young men, whose effort to get residence in Europe was unsuccessful and they returned to Gaza.

Distributing nutritional supplements to the elderly to help prevent Covid-19 infection and improve their immune systems.

SOCIO-PASTORAL DEPARTMENT YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Despite Covid restrictions on movement and the need for social distancing our Youth Programme continued, and the youth were active in many areas. This year’s programme continued lectures on the Church’s Social Teaching and putting that teaching into practice through voluntary work in their own parish and in organizations that care for the most vulnerable in society.

A new component this year was a focus on the history of Christianity in Palestine with lectures combined with visits to ancient churches and ruins of ancient churches and monasteries. This component was especially interesting to the young people and very much appreciated.

As part of developing the social commitment of the youth alongside understanding their rich Christian heritage the young people gathered information on the actual needs of each parish and designed their volunteering around meeting these needs.

An example of how understanding their rich heritage came together with present-day social commitment was an activity in the Jifna parish.

Adjacent to the modern churches were the ruins of a Byzantium Church, neglected and overgrown with vegetation. Caritas Youth organized 55 volunteers and over the course of two days revealed the ruins of this once living and beautiful Church. Local people were amazed and really appreciated what the young people had done.

Youth in Gaza chose an environmentally friendly activity, cleaning around the Church property and planting flowers. They also visited residents in a centre for the elderly and people with disabilities.

Youth volunteers cleaning the Byzantine Church in Jifna.

Youth organized 55 volunteers and over the course of two days revealed the ruins of this once living and beautiful Church. Local people were amazed and really appreciated what the young people had done.

The Youth in Gaza chose an environmentally friendly activity, cleaning around the Church property and planting flowers. They also visited residents in a centre for the elderly and people with disabilities.
During the Advent season we launched an awareness campaign through 46 Churches of all denominations. The campaign focused on delivering personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, alcogel, and non-contact thermometers and specially designed health awareness posters. As part of our Youth Program the young people decided to launch a Christmas Campaign entitled “staying safe from Covid-19 over the holiday seasons” to promote awareness about how to prevent the spread of the Corona virus during the Christmas liturgies and celebrations. The purpose of this campaign was to alleviate some of the financial pressure on parishes while simultaneously ensuring the safety of their congregations. Caritas Youth managed the campaign that targeted 46 parishes in the West Bank and Gaza, and by December 24th they had given the supplies to each church according to its needs. On Christmas Night they welcomed parishioners as they entered the Churches and reiterating the safety message on how to keep safe during the holy season.

The Youth in Gaza also painted a Covid safety awareness mural on a public wall as part of their initiative.

Since 2010, Caritas Jerusalem has been collaborating with the American Wheelchair Mission with the goal to deliver wheelchairs to those who are without mobility or the means to acquire a wheelchair both in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Thousands of wheelchairs have been donated to Caritas Jerusalem, which has then distributed them to local hospitals and organizations that work with physically disabled children, teens, and adults. Through this initiative, they gain not only the transformative ability of mobility, but also hope for a better quality of life through the empowerment that comes with mobility.

Due to the spread of the Covid-19 virus, we could not invite recipients of the wheelchairs to our facilities as we had done in previous years because of restrictions on movement. Instead, the American Wheelchair Mission and Caritas Jerusalem staff members worked tirelessly to ensure the safe transportation of 100 chairs to 13 organizations who care for people with disabilities, the elderly and the sick.

These organizations then distributed the wheelchairs to the people who need them, who see a wheelchair as a means towards independence and, in some circumstances, a help to becoming a more productive member of society. Caritas Jerusalem has been conducting this project for several years, with the goal of improving the mobility and independence of the recipients and having a positive impact on other aspects of their lives. Most importantly, this donation from American Wheelchair Mission helps to put a smile on their faces.

Through an ongoing programme whose aim is to enable Christian children to attend Christian schools we provided partial scholarshops to 591 students in 21 schools in the Bethlehem area. Eligible students were chosen by our social workers in consultation with each school’s Principal or social worker. As part of the same programme 150 food parcels were given to the neediest families.
**Elderly Day Care Center**

In response to the Covid-19 emergency, we distributed freshly cooked, nutritious meals to about 200 elderly individuals and couples who had no family members to care for them. Many of these vulnerable people were known to our social workers in Ramallah and others were recommended by local priests and the Ministry of Social Development. As well as nutritious meals we provided hygiene kits and explained to the elderly how to protect themselves from catching the Covid virus.

Our social workers keep in regular contact with these senior citizens through visits and telephone calls to ensure their wellbeing, to lessen their sense of isolation during lockdown and to help them in other ways such as paying their annual health insurance fee, delivering medication from local pharmacies and other simple services.

This continuing contact contributed to the overall goal of improving the physical and mental health the elderly housebound living in poor and isolated households in the Ramallah area.

We delivered Christmas gifts to the elderly to alleviate the loneliness they felt at Christmas, even if it was a small gesture. Youth volunteers assisted in all these initiatives.

Number of meals distributed: 3350  
Number of visits conducted: 1490

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**Health and Emergency Department**

This Department is responsible for all Caritas Jerusalem's Health Care and Emergency projects.

**Health and Emergency response**

In early 2020 when the Covid virus spread in Israel and Palestine our Primary Health Care clinics, one in Taybeh in the West Bank and one in Beach Camp in Gaza, responded immediately to the needs of the communities in coordination with the local Ministry of Health, while continuing their normal services as far as possible.

In the West Bank our main focus was on public health awareness and prevention of spread of the virus and on strengthening the capacity of organisations that care for the vulnerable including people with disabilities and the elderly.

**Response to the Covid-19 crisis in the West-Bank:**

When the Corona-19 virus was diagnosed in Bethlehem in March 2020 a total lockdown was imposed on the West Bank and Jerusalem. Tourists and pilgrims were evacuated with devastating consequences for the local economy that depends heavily on the tourist industry. As an immediate response, Caritas Jerusalem, with the help of our Youth volunteers, distributed food parcels to the poorest families identified by parish priests. We applied for emergency funds to provide humanitarian assistance to a greater number of people who had suddenly lost their source of income and there is no social welfare in Palestine for the unemployed.

Throughout the year, through the generosity of our donors we were able to provide relief to thousands of the neediest people in the West Bank including:

- Food parcels to 900 families as immediate relief and later through emergency projects.
- Food coupons to 865 families, the coupons were distributed to these families through 12 organizations in the West Bank that care for people with disabilities and other vulnerable people.
Hygiene kits to 900 families and institutions, combined with health education to enable them to protect themselves from contacting the virus and from infecting others.

Educational toys to 400 families whose children had limited or no access to online education and their mental health was being affected.

Emergency relief as cash to cover basic needs such as rent, utility bills, necessary house renovations and food

Medical support and Health Insurance coverage for more than 100 people

Home delivery of freshly cooked, nutritious food to more than 200 elderly people in the Ramallah area during lockdown.

Freephone help line where a doctor and nurse were available to offer advice and reassurance concerning the Covid virus to worried callers.

PPE and hygiene items delivered to our clinic in Taybeh

As part of a Caritas Jerusalem Covid-19 response project, co-financed by the Polish development cooperation programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, in collaboration with Caritas Poland, we delivered four ventilators to the National Rehabilitation Center in Bethlehem which treats coronavirus infected people. This strengthened the center’s capacity to treat extremely ill patients, offered emergency humanitarian aid to Bethlehem, and assisted the Palestinian health sector in saving lives.

The center has a new ICU ward dedicated especially for treating coronavirus infected patients. The director of the National Rehabilitation Center expressed his gratitude to Caritas Jerusalem, through which the project was implemented, and was thankful for this cooperation, which has increased the center’s capacity to treat the seriously ill. In attendance were the representatives of the Republic of Poland to Palestine, Przemysław Czyż, Dr. Imad Shehadeh the Director of the National Center, Sr. Bridget Tighe Caritas Jerusalem’s Secretary General, and the governor of Bethlehem Governorate, who, during the official delivery of the ventilators, discussed the epidemiological situation in Bethlehem, highlighting the significant increase in the number of infected patients and the repercussions for health efforts and services. He expressed gratitude on behalf of the Palestinian people for the fast emergency medical assistance.
Covid-19 Emergency Response in Gaza

In May 2020, in response to a request from the Ministry of Health (MOH), our Gaza staff designed an Emergency Contingency Plan to be implemented if requested by the MOH. The Plan included five Mobile Medical Teams (MMTs), each with a doctor, nurse, and driver, with Caritas Health Centre staff and facilities as backup. In August, they were requested to provide primary health care to non-Covid patients in their homes to reduce the strain on hospitals and prevent the virus from spreading in the community. MOH call responders directed the MMTs to the homes of the sick where they provided the necessary care that included physical examination, simple lab tests, medication, wound dressing, even ultrasound examination of pregnant women using a portable ultrasound machine. This service brought much-needed relief and reassurance to poor, sick and worried people in lockdown.

Unfortunately, the virus spread quickly, and in early December the Ministry of Health asked our teams to visit the homes of people suspected of being infected with the virus to determine whether the infected person(s) could safely self-isolate at home and, if not, to refer them to a government quarantine center. The teams also visited to those in quarantine to see how they are coping and to offer any assistance they could. The members of these MMTs worked on the front line in exceedingly dangerous conditions and continue to serve the people in need with the support of our donors whose generosity enables us to continue providing these services.

On-going programmes in Gaza

We continued to provide a comprehensive range of medical, social, and humanitarian services in the Gaza Strip, where people who were already destitute are falling deeper into poverty and desperation. Our services include:

A wide range of high-quality primary health and dental services with specialists in different fields, as well as a well-equipped path lab and pharmacy, are available at the Health Centre, which also serves as the administrative hub for all of our activities in Gaza.

A programme for the elderly that focuses on health education, nutrition, medical diagnosis, and treatment.

Mobile medical teams that provide primary health care in 15 disadvantaged and marginalized areas, several of which are close to the separation fence.

A programme for children’s dentistry and overall health care.
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

This Department combines Food Security and the right to food, Microcredit programmes, and a Vocational Training Center for sewing and dress design. Its overall aim is to empower the poor, both men and women, to attain sustainable income through modern agricultural methods and agro-tourism, job creation and small business projects, and through training programmes, workshops and mentoring to equip them with the technical and administrative skills to manage their projects.

Food Security, Livelihoods and Development:

All initiatives and activities are undertaken in consultation and partnership with local government ministries and municipalities. In the Bethlehem Governorate we continued to focus on land rehabilitation, agroecology, and assisting local farmers in producing and marketing organic produce through different projects whose objectives include:

- Strengthening the local market and improving food security through the production and commercialization of agroecological products.
- Developing the capacity of local farmers and increasing productivity of their land through modern agroecological practices and systems.
- Enhancement of the local market through community mobilization and social initiatives, and by supporting the farmers in establishing a cooperative.
- Job creation for skilled and unskilled workers.

Activities during 2020 required a wide range of community mobilisation, agroecology expertise, leadership and supervisory skills, and manual labour. About 120 dunums of land was rehabilitated by building terraces, fences and raised beds; tillage and manual rehabilitation; erecting gates, fences and water tanks.

In the north of the West Bank, we are implementing a range of projects aimed at strengthening a sustainable and diversified rural economy in the countryside of the Jenin Governorate as well as developing a local agro-tourism industry.

Activities and projects

Agriculture remains one of the priority sectors of the Palestinian National Development Plan and the most important contributor to the local economy. In the Jenin Governorate agriculture provides job opportunities for almost 40% of the total workforce engaged in the non-formal economy. In addition to strengthening a sustainable rural economy and ensuring food security, through a range of opportunities and diversification strategies, we encourage young people and female farmers to remain on the land, to valorise and preserve natural resources, local identities, traditions and heritages.
**SUCCESS STORY**

**A GREENHOUSE HAS CHANGED GHADA’S LIFE FOR THE BETTER**

Ghada Barakat, 44, is a widow and mother of seven children. Hasan, her oldest son, recently graduated from high school but was unable to continue his education due to the family’s financial difficulties. Her older daughters have married and moved out, but her three younger sons, the youngest of whom is in fourth grade, are still in school. Aside from her deceased husband’s pension, the family previously relied solely on a limited income from a grocery store they run next to their home.

Ghada was awarded a small income-generating project grant, allowing her to erect a 250-square-meter greenhouse. For her and her family, this was a pivotal turning point. With the help of Caritas employees, who supported her thought the project’s implementation, she applied what she had learned in the trainings regarding modern agricultural practices provided by Caritas Jerusalem and was able to gain experience in the field that improved her abilities and the project’s long-term viability. Hassan, her son, assists her in the greenhouse.

By selling organic produce, she was able to increase her profits and is now able to support her children through school and university. Her son is now enrolled and will begin attending university in 2021.

When asked how this project has benefited her, she stated that it has made a significant difference in her life because she now sells her produce to the community of her village, Marj Ben Amer, and markets it on social media. She has gained customers among local housewives who appreciate the organic vegetables and now come to Ghada to buy them.

She expressed with great happiness her joy at having developed social connections with the residents of her neighborhood, and that the project has improved her community social interactions, which is very significant to her, especially in these trying times. She also noted that she was consulted and that the project’s staff respected and valued her opinions.

Activities during 2020 included:

An exchange visit conducted for the beneficiary farmers to three farms: an agro-ecological farm in Al Nasareyah village, a protected agricultural technology farm Frosh Beit Dajan village, and an agro-ecological farm in Al Zababdeh village. These visits were highly appreciated by all, especially by Caritas beneficiary farmers who were introduced to different methods of farming and potential for developing their own land.

Agri-tourism, a new development in the Region, is a potential complementary source of income for the small holders of Jenin Governorate to promote Jenin as a tourist destination. A study of the existing and potential tangible and intangible heritage in the targeted territory was conducted and published. A call for application for small agrotourism grants was announced and from the many applicants 6 were chosen according to the published criteria.
Caritas Jerusalem staff held a meeting with local Mayors to identify the needs and opportunities and how best to move forward with this project to benefit the local community.

**6 agrotourism grants for the following projects were approved:**
- A traditional food restaurant in an agro-ecology farm located in Zababdeh village.
- A joint venture for a bike trails initiative located in Zababdeh Village.
- A mobile kiosk to sell traditional and special gifts as well as rural products in Al Jalameh village.
- An exhibition to sell rural and traditional products in Al Jalameh village.
- Souvenirs shop to sell special and traditional gifts and rural products in Faqou’a village.

**Vocational Training Center**

Identifying with Caritas Jerusalem’s core value of dignity, seeking to make people subjects of their own development and agents of change, our vocational training center in Ain Arik offers a various range of trainings including sewing, mannequin drawing, detailing, to-rus, industrial pattern, crochet and handicrafts. After the completion of the course the students are awarded a skilled level professional Diploma, certified by the Palestinian Ministry of Labor. Some of these participants had never obtained a formal qualification and this Diploma empowers them to reach their goal of being able to generate their own income and provide for themselves and their families.

Suzan Al Omari (22 years old) is a married woman from Faqou’a village who lives with her husband, (Amir, 30 years old), her in-laws and 8-month-old baby. Amir is an unskilled laborer who works in Jenin on and off on a daily basis with an average monthly income of NIS 1,800 (app. EUR 430) and Suzan is a homemaker, therefore a family of 5 had to survive on Amir’s income. Life was very hard for them, because Amir took loans to buy furniture and other necessities before the wedding and most of what he made went into paying his loans.

In order to make ends meet, Amir bought 4 beehives and tried to start a small income generating activity by himself and Suzan helped him when he was away working. When she saw the announcement from Caritas about income generating activities, Suzan applied and received 15 beehives, trainings on best practices and the needed items to expand and succeed in the new family business.

They received the grant in 2019 and almost after a year they succeeded in producing and selling 200 kg of honey which added NIS 20,000 to the family’s annual income. With this additional money they were able to pay all their loans and now they have plans to expand the business.

“The grant that we received from Caritas enabled us to stand on our own feet and now the future of my family depends on the success of our endeavours. Thanks God we were able to succeed and make a good profit last year. I am sure that this year we will make better because currently we have 35 beehives. Thank you for all the help and the skills we learnt from you.” Expressed the beneficiary.
THANK YOU FOR BEING A PARTNER AND A FRIEND

- Abbayee De Latroun
- Belen 2000
- CAFO
- Caritas Aotearoa – New Zealand
- Caritas Belgium International
- Caritas Chile
- Caritas Korea
- Caritas Hong Kong
- Caritas Humanitarian Aid & Relief Initiatives, Singapore
- Caritas Internationalis
- Caritas Italiana
- Caritas Japan
- Caritas Poland
- Caritas Spain
- Caritas Switzerland
- Catholic Relief Services (CRS)
- Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development
- Diocese of Chur – Switzerland
- Dr. Marc Halbritter
- EMBRACE The Middle East
- Fr. Paul Clayton
- Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood, Ladywell Convent, UK
- Government of Aragon
- Initiative Christlicher Orient
- International Medical Corps
- Italian Bishops Conference
- Manos Unidas
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland
- Misean Cara
- O Crux Ave Foundation
- Secours Catholique – Caritas France
- Secretariate De Solidareti
- Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation – AECID
- St. Jean-Marie Vianney Lausanne
- The Italian Episcopal Conference
- Trocaire