Caritas completed the rehabilitation of a vital agricultural route in February as part of the project "Enhancement of the local market through social initiatives that facilitate the right to food in Beit Jala". The route, which is 200 meters long and up to 4 meters wide, is intended to improve farmers’ access to their lands. It serves about 90 farmers.

We implemented development, agricultural, and food security projects in the Beit Jala area with the goal of assisting poor and vulnerable communities by improving their access to nutritious food and supporting the development of income-generating projects. We’ve enabled farmers to utilize the existing natural resources of their own land by implementing water resource preservation and community wells rehabilitation activities. Farmers were involved at every stage of developing and implementing these projects and now proudly display their organic fruit and vegetables. They are in the process of establishing a local cooperative to market their produce and ensure the cultivation and care of the rehabilitated land, supported by Caritas staff. We also conducted awareness sessions on environmental and agro-ecological issues for local school students.

In collaboration with the joint municipalities of Marj Ibn Amer, Burqin, and Zababdeh, three rural communities in northern Palestine, Caritas Jerusalem established an electronic platform which is a Digital Tourist Information Center, with a corresponding mobile app. with which to access the information. The platform and mobile app. were created to enable people, local and others, to explore the heritage, culture and nature of these communities and to promote tourism to this area that is rich in history and culture. Ministries of Tourism, Antiquities, Culture, Agriculture, Local Government, the Environmental Quality Authority, and the Committee for the Promotion and Development of Tourism in Jenin Governorate, were among the many local entities involved.
Supporting Severely Disabled Children in the West Bank

Children with disabilities (CWD) are often among the most vulnerable and underserved members of society. In the Bethlehem area we are implementing projects to develop the capacity of organisations that care for CWD, to provide training for carers, usually the mothers and to develop the potential of the children. One of these organisations, supported by the project, manages rehabilitation centres in three remote villages where the children receive occupational, speech and physiotherapy sessions that aim to improve their motor skills, communication and general health.

Earlier this year Caritas organised a Fun Day for these children and their carers. On a beautiful Spring day several busloads arrived at the spacious grounds of a local convent where our Youth Volunteers provided entertainment and local caterers provided delicious food. Some mothers said they had not had a day out for years because they had to care for their child or young adult with severe disability. The day was therapeutic and enjoyable for the carers and children and highlighted the need for such projects.

Small Improvements, huge results!

In the therapeutic centres the children are making remarkable progress. Even the simple act of a child being able to hold a cup is considered as a great achievement by their mothers who expressed how a small improvement makes a big difference. Ahmad has gained motor skills which enabled him to start crawling, hold his own cup of water and give Hi-fives!
Musa can now walk!

Musa was normal at birth but as a toddler he developed rickets, a disease that softens and weakens the bones, causing his legs to bow.

Unable to explain to her two-and-a-half-year-old child why he could not join his brothers in simple games or run with them during playtime, Musa's mother sought treatment at different facilities.

She travelled from a remote camp in Gaza to get to the one of the center where Caritas Jerusalem provides medical care and assistance aimed to serve vulnerable populations in the Gaza Strip.

The specialist doctor noticed Musa's deformity and that his wrists were very thick, so they ordered an X-ray and other tests. Musa was diagnosed with severe bone leniency caused by malnutrition and vitamin D deficiency.

He was prescribed Vitamin D pills and to be exposed to sunrays for a minimum of half an hour a day. It seems like a simple solution, but Gaza is densely populated and many neighborhoods are overcrowded. With houses so close together it can be a challenge to get sunlight. Musa was also referred to Caritas's nutritionist who gave guidance to the mother to treat his nutritional deficiency and followed up with her to make sure that the malnourishment is treated effectively.

Musa comes from a low-income family that struggles to get food and does not have the means to afford vitamin D-rich foods such as sardines, tuna and chicken liver, which are expensive. The family can't even afford the transportation to reach the clinic. Still, his family was able to continue the treatment, and within six weeks, there was significant improvement, with 80 percent of the curvature gone and Musa growing 3 cm taller.

Musa is not alone, CJ doctors have identified over 50 patients since starting this project, all of which are children, who were diagnosed with bone leniency, fortunately with the provided treatment, he has improved, and he can now walk.

His mother is overjoyed with his progress and expressed her gratitude to the physicians at Caritas Jerusalem, saying that "the difference is evident to family members who visit us, and I couldn't be more thankful".
All Caritas Jerusalem staff and partners receive training in safeguarding and protection of children and vulnerable adults and are committed to maintaining a safe environment for all for whom we care.

Safeguarding monitoring visits were conducted recently by the Secretary General and the Communications and Safeguarding Officer who visited all the centers where Caritas Jerusalem provides medical care in remote and poor villages across the Gaza Strip.

Why it matters

The Safeguarding Officer interviewed the directors of these centers, staff members, and mobile medical team members to make sure they are implementing safeguarding in their practices and are abiding by Caritas Jerusalem’s code of conduct. A safeguarding risk assessment was also conducted.

For more information on Caritas Jerusalem’s work please visit: www.caritasjr.org