





## Gaza war



The devastating war on Gaza 10th – 21st May, on top of the Corona pandemic, on-going blockade, closed borders and deepening poverty caused extreme suffering and fear among the people. Gazans are all too familiar with war but this was more brutal and destructive of homes and infrastructure than any other. During the war it was impossible for our staff to work but two days after the ceasefire was announced they were all back on duty ready to help the suffering and traumatized people even though they too had endured the terror and trauma of the war. Sr Bridget went to Gaza a few days later to support the staff, to see the damage and hear what immediate support was most needed to which Caritas could respond.

Sr Bridget and senior staff visited some of the most severely damaged areas. They met local people whose homes were totally destroyed, saw the ruins of apartment blocks where whole families had been wiped out, damage to main roads that prevented ambulances from reaching public hospitals and high-rise apartment blocks whose foundations were bombed but the buildings were still standing. People were climbing through windows to retrieve what personal belongings they could salvage and teams of men saving anything that can be re-used.



Foundation of building bombed



Same building. Straightening metal rods for re-use





Rapid Response Clinics

From listening to the people and community leaders It became clear that in the most severely damaged areas basic medical care was urgently needed. Many clinics and hospitals were damaged or destroyed and functioning hospitals were overcrowded and severely under-resourced. We decided to launch a two-month Rapid Response Emergency Appeal to provide primary health care and basic trauma care for less serious injuries and those discharged early from hospital.



Rapid Response Clinics



War wound dressing



The Rapid Response project ended in late August and we continue our care of people in some of the worst affected areas through a Post War Emergency Project. This includes continuing mobile clinics in two of the most needy areas, psychosocial support for families, clean drinking water and cash coupons. In times like this, though by no means limited to emergencies, we experience the wonderful support of our partners and friends.



## How Covid-19 affected our work

When the Covid virus was first diagnosed in the Bethlehem area and it was possible to travel within the West Bank, we distributed food parcels to the neediest families in cooperation with parish priests. We soon received generous funds to give more support to a greater number of people.

In Ramallah, instead of bringing vulnerable elderly people to our Day Care Centre we initiated a programme to deliver freshly cooked nutritious meals twice weekly to the homes of the elderly who live alone. To avoid over-dependency and to help as many as possible each person received meals for three consecutive months.

Our social workers who know the area, sometimes accompanied by youth volunteers, kept contact with all these senior citizens to lessen their sense of isolation and loneliness and to ensure that they had essential medicines and other items. As lockdown eased throughout the West Bank we continued our agriculture and development programmes. Our clinic in Taybeh remained open throughout the pandemic and receives over 500 patients per month.

Since the Corona virus was first diagnosed in the Gaza Strip in April 2020 we've had mobile medical teams, working in coordination with the Ministry of Health, caring for people in their homes to take pressure off the overcrowded hospitals and minimize spread of the virus in the community. We continue to treat Covid positive patients in their homes, providing them with food and hygiene parcels, health and nutrition education, dietary supplements, social and psychological counselling as well as instructing them in infection control through discussion, brochures and answering their many questions.



Covid-19 Home visit



Mother and Child Health clinic

Our teams, that include doctors and nurses, assess if a covid positive patient can self-isolate at home or be transferred to a quarantine centre and our doctors refer seriously ill covid patients to hospital. To date our staff have visited 11,700 families, many multi-generational with several family members.



Throughout the Covid pandemic our Mobile Medical Teams in Gaza continued to travel daily to some of the poorest and most marginalized areas on the Gaza Strip providing primary health care, health and nutrition education and information of how to prevent the spread of the Covid virus.



## Socio-Pastoral Department - Youth



A group of our youth volunteers demonstrated care of the environment by planting trees and painting the sidewalks in order to decorate the entrance to the Latin Patriarchate in Beit Sahour.



They also planted trees in the Parish of Beit Sahour and installed solar-powered headlights to contribute to the activation of the parish and its facilities.

### Safeguarding

In recent months we've upgraded our Safeguarding policies and practices through a combination of on-line training and workshops. Our updated Safeguarding policies and documents were approved by Caritas Jerusalem Board of Directors at their meeting on 3rd March 2021. On 7th June we conducted a full day's training in Safeguarding for all our staff in Gaza led by an experienced trainer. A total of 105 staff participated in the training.

### Humanitarian aid

Thanks to the generosity of our donors we are able to give financial help to families and individuals in real need. Immediate help is sometimes needed to pay a doctor's fee or hospital bill or to help a poor family in crisis due to illness or other emergency. When larger sums are needed our social workers cooperate with their counterparts in other local organisations and in most cases the required sum is raised.

### Organisational Development

We developed a comprehensive Procurement and Procedures Policy and all staff responsible for procurements participated in four full days of intensive training.





# Elderly Day Care Center in Ramallah



We continue delivery of freshly cooked nutritious meals twice a week to senior housebound individuals, as well as hygiene kits and nutritional supplements to help them avoid contracting the Covid-19 virus and improve their immune systems. In order to reach a greater number and to prevent over-dependency each elderly person received home delivery of food. Our social workers maintain contact with them all to alleviate their sense of isolation and make sure they have their medication and other necessities.

Covid restrictions were relaxed for a time and in June we organized a day trip to Jericho for some of our elderly, taking all safety precautions and following infection control protocols, plus the service of a registered nurse. The trip was a great success and all expressed the joy of being able to get out of the house and enjoy a recreational day. Our next planned trip is in September when we will take a different group to enjoy a day out after months of being housebound, when it is safe to do so.



By the Jordan river



Enjoying a picnic in the open air

A big thank you to the people of Ramallah who are extremely generous in donating food, toiletries, gifts for Mother's Day and other special occasions and for funding the Day out in Jericho.



# CARE OF THE ELDERLY IN GAZA



## Medical care of the elderly in their homes during the Covid pandemic

In Gaza we've just completed a three-year project caring for the elderly that included health and nutrition education, medical investigation and treatment and assistive devices. During that period we treated and befriended 4,800 senior citizens and met many of their family members and neighbours. Older people, while respected by society, are often neglected when resources are scarce and the young are given preference. This is especially true of older women who often neglect themselves.

This project addressed these deeply ingrained attitudes by the care and attention our staff gave to the elderly and by a range of educational components that included a short course on gerontology for newly graduated doctors and nurses.

We later employed some of these young graduates on the project and one of the doctors plans to specialize in geriatric medicine because, she said, these are some of the most needy yet neglected people in Gaza.

Since the outbreak of the Covid virus our teams have visited the elderly in their homes, a move that was really appreciated by the people and their families and many of our staff who had never seen the level of poverty in which so many people live, said they felt their work on the project was really worthwhile.

Our mobile teams, dressed in full personal protective equipment, became a familiar sight in some of the poorest neighbourhoods in the southern part of the Gaza Strip. Corona-19 unexpectedly promoted visibility of Caritas Jerusalem's care of the most neglected section of Gazan society!





## Development and job creation

### Olive wood project

People in the Bethlehem area are still suffering greatly from the lack of tourists and pilgrims due to the Corona virus pandemic. We are helping small olive wood workshops through a project to produce olive wood crosses and rosaries for Catholic dioceses in Europe.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bMU0-pvP4g>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOuWGG7Gal8>



Local residents in Jenin, a beautiful agricultural region in the north of the West Bank, see the potential for in-country agro-tourism and this project includes study of that potential. One such study is completed and published. Six agro-tourism grants were given to develop bike trails, traditional food restaurants in organic farms, a stand-by kiosk, an exhibition for selling safe agricultural products and local food, and a shop to design and sell local products. A platform, mobile applications, promo- videos, documentation for tangible and intangible tourism attractions for 13 villages and towns.

Our food security projects aim to contribute to the social and economic development of the population, to make farming financially profitable and enable farmers to remain on the land, to introduce young people to environmental issues and to the option of farming as a career choice. Our work in the Bethlehem Governorate continues with emphasis on rehabilitating the land, promoting agroecology and supporting local farmers in producing and marketing organic produce. Recent initiatives in this area include:

- Rehabilitation of 26 agricultural wells combined with supplying plastic tanks and gasoline pumps.
- Rehabilitation of eight community water wells for local organizations including schools, clubs, churches, municipality and parishes.
- 10 awareness sessions about environmental issues for schoolchildren. We combined an Easter egg hunting activity for local children with an introduction to the beauty of the country and the land, agroecology and the concept of local organic food.

