

CARITAS MONA

ANNUAL ACTIVITY
REPORT
2024



CARITAS MONA IDENTITY

Caritas MONA, whose Secretariat is in Beirut, is one of the 7 Regions of the Caritas Internationalis (CI) Confederation. It is subdivided into three zones - the Middle East, North-Africa, and the Horn of Africa - and covers more than 9.5 million km², 15 countries, and a population of nearly 390 million inhabitants. It is rich in the cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity that characterizes it, being at the crossroads of East and West. Subject to multiple external and internal struggles, the Region faces strong geopolitical tensions, which have led to persistent economic crises, large refugee movements and major armed conflicts, in addition to the effects of climate change and water scarcity.

Fifteen Member Organizations (MOs) of the Caritas network are involved (Algeria, Cyprus, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jerusalem, Jordan, Lebanon, (Libya), Morocco, Mauritania, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia), mandated by their respective episcopal conferences, in contexts involving significant challenges with respect to emergencies, social inequalities, minorities, and the sectarian fragmentation of societies, in often vulnerable and unstable nations.

STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS

In its new Strategic Framework (SF) 2024-2030, Caritas MONA has determined 4 Strategic Orientations (SO):

SO1: Caritas is at the heart of the church	SO2: CARITAS promotes Emergency Response, Integral Human Development (IHD), and Peace and Reconciliation in the communities
SO3: CARITAS builds global solidarity	SO4: CARITAS is a professional network

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SO1: CARITAS is at the heart of the Church

To facilitate a network of MOs at the service of the Common Good

Regional Capacity Strengthening Project (CSP) on the Identity and Mission of Caritas

The new phase of the Regional Capacity Strengthening Project (CSP) for 2024-2025 has been designed to address a need expressed by the Region and the Confederation to provide the MOs with a renewed space for reflection on the identity and mission of Caritas, and to launch internal orientation training for key staff, the managers, and governance members of the region's MOs. Thirteen of the fifteen MONA MOs are currently participating in the project. Representatives from each participating MO form a core group of Focal Points who, on one hand, receive training, and on the other hand, share experiences, discuss and participate in the development of the project's content and implementation. The Focal Points are all mandated by their organizations and part of the management or senior teams; they will be tasked with organizing orientation training within their respective MOs and start to implement a synodal process.

In 2024 and 2025, CSP activities include the development of training materials, thematic webinars, meetings, and in-person training for the core group of focal points, as well as orientation training organized in three pilot MOs (Djibouti, Lebanon, Syria). An orientation session will also be provided to the directors and presidents of the MONA MOs during the regional conference in 2025. A "synodal process" is also planned in the pilot MOs.

In 2024, the following activities were carried out:

- A presentation and launch meeting with the regional directors (February 2024).
- The selection and confirmation of focal points (March 2024) and a launch meeting with them (April 2024).
- A thematic webinar: Introduction to the Work of Caritas and Fraternal Cooperation, with the contribution of Ms. Moira Monacelli (May 2024).
- The collection of existing induction materials from the MOs (June 2024).
- A coordination meeting with the focal points, including an exchange of experiences on the training implemented, as well as the initiation of preparations for the in-person training workshop, specifically regarding the objectives, thematic areas of the training, and gathering their expectations and recommendations (July 2024).
- Exchanges with CI (Ms. Stephanie McGillivray) and the SO1 Committee Co-Chair (Msgr. Pierre Cibambo) regarding existing materials on these themes. (June and October 2024).
- Preparation of content, speakers, and logistics for an in-person training workshop for the Core Group, which was initially scheduled to take place in Lebanon in October 2024. However, due to the escalation of the war in Lebanon, the decision was made in September 2024 to postpone the event to 2025.

With the donor's approval, the Regional Secretariat has reviewed the project and reorganized all activities, the budget, and the plan in response to the new situation. In connection with this project and within the broader framework of its mandate, the Regional Secretariat has also organized an information and orientation meeting for the newly elected presidents of Caritas Djibouti and Caritas Syria.

History of Caritas MONA

Caritas MONA has resumed the project of writing its history. A preliminary document was sent to all the Member Organizations for their feedback. A chronology of important regional events in which the Member Organizations were involved or affected was then added. To this end, the Regional Secretariat collected and sorted the information sent by the Member Organizations to develop a first chronology covering the period from 1950 to the present day. This was then sent back to all the Member Organizations for verification. The final document and its annexes have been translated into French and English and both versions are now ready for design and publication.

Fraternal Cooperation

Caritas MONA is still involved in the fraternal cooperation path taken by the entire Confederation. In addition to contributing to promoting its values and principles and coordinating or supporting its implementation between MONA MOs and their partners, the Regional Secretariat is part of the taskforce working on the elaboration of the Fraternal Cooperation Modus Operandi and other related documents. In March 2024, the Regional Secretariat has also conducted a regional consultation with the MONA MOs on the Modus Operandi, Guiding Principles, and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) documents sent by CI.

ROACO

ROACO (Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches) held its annual meeting in Rome from June 24-27, 2024. The Regional Coordinator was present at the meeting. The agenda included discussions about the current situations in the Holy Land and Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as a broader review of conditions in various countries where ROACO member agencies conduct their operations.



Spiritual Retreat

On August 7th, the Caritas MONA regional secretariat team participated in a spiritual retreat in Achkout, Lebanon, led by Msgr. César Essayan, Latin Vicar Apostolic of Lebanon. Through guided reflections, prayer, and meaningful dialogue, the staff explored Caritas' values, reminding their dedication to its mission of compassion and support. This experience has gained the team a fresh sense of purpose and unity, fostering a renewed energy as they return to their work, ready to collaborate and make a lasting impact in the community.



SO2: CARITAS promotes Emergency Response, Integral Human Development (IHD), and Peace and Reconciliation in the communities

To support MOs in strengthening the Triple nexus: Humanitarian Actors / Development Actors / Peace Actors

CI Humanitarian Conference

On 23 & 24 April 2024, Caritas Internationalis (CI) convened in Athens, Greece, 60 stakeholders from across the Confederation for its Humanitarian Conference. The event aimed to:

1. Bring together humanitarian practitioners from across the Caritas Confederation to celebrate achievements and learnings from recent humanitarian responses, while identifying key challenges to address in the upcoming strategic period.
2. Update participants on the Confederation's Humanitarian objectives, Governance Framework (Humanitarian Committee), and revisions to the Operating Model (Emergency Toolkit and Protocols), and seek their feedback.
3. Deep dive into key humanitarian priorities for the Confederation, building on past efforts needing continuity and exploring potential new areas of engagement.

The Regional Coordinator attended the conference alongside six others from the MONA Region, representing the Regional Secretariat and Caritas organizations: Jerusalem, Jordan, Morocco, Somalia, and Syria—all of whom are involved in Emergency response. Key takeaways from the conference included:

- *Regionalization*: Highlighting the critical role of regions.
- *Localization*: Emphasizing the need to implement localization in practice.
- *National Expertise*: Recognizing the value of national knowledge and knowledge sharing.
- *Context Adaptation*: Stressing the importance of adapting humanitarian response to local contexts.
- *Strategic Coordination*: Highlighting the necessity of strategic coordination with other committees and CI General Secretariat.

On April 25th, the Humanitarian Committee (HC) members held a hybrid meeting. This session served as a reminder of the Committee's terms of reference, including its mandate, roles, and responsibilities. Members were also updated on the status of other CI Committees. The main focus was on discussing and finalizing the HC's draft Work Plan, determining how members will collaborate, and agreeing on key actions to be implemented.

The RS is actively attending all HC meetings and contributing to the Confederation advancement in the area of Humanitarian Action.

Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and Lebanon

During the attacks on the OPT and Lebanon, the regional Secretariat of Caritas MONA, co-organized in collaboration with Caritas Internationalis (CI) and the most directly involved Caritas organizations; Caritas Jerusalem, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria, in addition to Caritas sister organizations and other partners, teleconferences, as well as informational and coordination meetings on the situation.

Two partners meetings were organized, one in Amman (January 2024) and one in Rome (March 2024).

Key advocacy messages have been prepared for use by Caritas organizations, and statements have been drafted or co-signed with CI and other sister Caritas organizations, partners and INGOs (Caritas Europa, IASC, Crisis Action, etc.), while ensuring ongoing regular coordination on advocacy between the Regional Secretariat and CI, including participation in meetings of the Ad Hoc Humanitarian Policy Task Force when topics related to these issues were discussed.

Also, there has been an agreement on a regional contingency plan covering the situation in OPT and Lebanon primarily and affected neighboring countries such as Syria, Jordan, Egypt, as well the responses led by the Caritas MOs operating in these countries or supporting the national MOs.

Finally, the participants agreed on drafting regional situation reports (Sitreps). CI and CRS assisted in collecting data and preparing the sitreps, while Caritas MONA published Regional Sitreps on the situation in Gaza and Lebanon.

Migration

Forum in Tunisia

In February 2024, Caritas Tunisia, together with its local and regional partners, organized a 2-day forum to collectively answer the question “Where are the parents, the guardians of these children?”. This event was part of the local Caritas' support for people on the move, as well as efforts to strengthen coordination between Caritas organizations in the countries of origin of migrants in Tunisia and Caritas Tunisia.

To better understand the local context and prepare for the forum, colleagues from sister Caritas organizations visited the city of Sfax on February 5. During the visit, they met the parish priest and the Sfax parish Caritas team, as well as local partners and migrants. This meeting deepened the attendees' understanding of the migratory routes in Sfax and the experiences of migrants on their journey to their “Eldorado”: Europe.

Afterwards, all participants, accompanied by delegates from the Sfax municipality, followed one of the routes taken by migrants to clandestinely reach the Mediterranean, before throwing flowers into the sea in tribute to the lives lost at sea. The event concluded with a mass, before participants returned to Tunis.

On the 6th & 7th of February, more than 60 participants, including leaders from national and international institutional and associative organizations working for the protection of children and families, were given a space for reflection and discussion. These exchanges enabled participants to analyze each other's observations and practices, and to identify areas for collaboration. At the end of the second day, a first draft action plan was developed, based on a shared vision and a coordinated approach to intervention. Caritas Tunisia will follow up on this plan with its local and international partners to improve coordination.

On February 8, 2024, a spiritual morning was organized for colleagues from the various Caritas organizations, bringing the forum to a close. This moment of sharing provided an opportunity to discuss prospects for collaboration between sister Caritas in the MONA and Africa regions.

Multi-stakeholder Consultation and Regional Review Conference of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Arab Region 02, 03 & 04 July 2024 in Cairo, Egypt

Caritas MONA's Partnership Officer Mrs. Sylvia Eid, participated in the Multi-stakeholder Consultation for the Second Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in the Arab Region which was held in Cairo on 02 July 2024. The Regional Review Conference of the GCM took place in the League of Arab States on 03 & 04 July 2024.

Mrs. Eid addressed the 3rd plenary session on Protecting and empowering migrant workers and operationalizing their role in the sustainable development process in countries of origin and destination. She emphasized the need for a holistic approach to migration from the pre-departure phase to the reintegration of migrant workers into their communities upon their return. She also stressed the importance of partnership and involvement of different stakeholders including governments of countries of origin, transit and destination. It is worth noting that all views and recommendations tackled during the three days have been incorporated into the global report on GCM implementation.



MIGRARED International Meeting on Migration and Asylum:

Caritas Internationalis and SELACC (Secretariat of Caritas Latin America and Caribbean) organized the inaugural MIGRARED - International Meeting on Migration and Asylum, in Bogotá, Colombia, from September 27 to 29, 2024, to coincide with the 110th World Day of Migrants and Refugees (September 29), focusing on the theme, "God walks with His people."

MIGRARED aims to create a platform for dialogue and strategic collaboration among Caritas members, regions, and networks engaged in human mobility, as well as public authorities, migrants, refugees, and their self-organized communities. The meeting addressed current trends and challenges in migration and asylum across various migration contexts and key migration routes. It also focused on strengthening joint advocacy and fostering collaboration among networks working on these critical issues.

Caritas MONA was originally scheduled to participate in person. However, due to the ongoing conflict in Lebanon and the closure of the airport, Mrs. Eid contributed remotely on September 28. She provided an insightful presentation on the protracted crisis in Syria, offering an overview of both the old and newly emerging migratory routes to Europe. She also highlighted the challenges faced by refugees in the host communities and by returnees in their communities of origin.

RAEMH Network participation

The Réseau Afrique Europe pour la Mobilité Humaine or Africa-Europe Network for Human Mobility (RAEMH) was created in 2017 under the name “Regional Programme for Human Mobility” (PRMH), initially comprising Caritas Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Spain, France and later, Mauritania. In 2021, the network broadened its horizons by integrating new members: Caritas Mali, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Senegal and Niger. It was at this point that the network adopted its current name; “Africa-Europe Network for Human Mobility”- RAEMH.

RAEMH is a network of local actors who are constantly striving to improve their work with people in mobility situations, by putting the individual at the center of their action and adopting an integral and all-encompassing vision of support for these people, while respecting and enhancing their dignity.

RAEMH’s main mission is to support its member organizations so that they are able to meet the needs of people in mobility situations according to the verbs set out by Pope Francis on World Migrants and Refugees Day in January 2018: “Welcome, Protect, Promote, Integrate”.

Its main activities include the exchange of practices as driving force for change, joint actions and pooling of working resources, the promotion of a new narrative on human mobility, and creation of a dynamic, integrated network within member organizations.

As a Regional Structure, Caritas MONA joined the network at the beginning of 2024, helping to strengthen the coordination of actions related to human mobility at the regional, inter-regional and global levels. During the year, the RS actively participated in several coordination meetings and two webinars as part of a cycle of reflection on the issues and challenges faced by migrants returning to their respective countries of origin.

Committees' Forum: Strategic Engagement and Regional Impact

The committee's Forum of Caritas Internationalis was held in Rome November 18-19, 2024. It brought together more than 100 participants from seven regions to enhance the strategic framework 2024-2030.



The regional secretariat of the Middle East and North of Africa (MONA) participated to this forum.

The participation was effective in several areas, ensuring regional issues were properly addressed in strategic planning. The delegation helped define responsibilities and priorities for 2025 working groups, focusing on youth participation and dialogue across committees including communication, fundraising, advocacy, and development. The participants from the RS also stressed the importance of working between

regions.

Caritas MONA's input helped create a practical action plan for 2025 that addresses both regional needs and global strategy. This work supports Caritas MONA's goal to help its communities.

Involving MOs in the United Nations High Level Political Forum (July 2024)

In April, CI shared with Caritas MONA an opportunity for a young Caritas staff member or volunteer from the confederation to attend the United Nations High Level Political Forum in person in New York City in July, as a delegate of Caritas Internationalis. The successful candidate was supposed to be a panelist at a side-event that Caritas Internationalis is co-sponsoring along with "ChildFund" Alliance on 10 July, and to represent Caritas Internationalis in an official capacity at other events of the High-Level Political Forum during the week of 8-12 July. The Regional Secretariat informed its MOs and followed up with them for participants' selection; and as a result 13 youth from 5 MOs submitted their candidature for this event. Although none of them was selected, they were informed of ways of participating online.

Regional MOs' involvement in CI's 2024 World Day of the Poor/World Youth Day week of prayer and action (17-24 November 2024)

Caritas MONA coordinated with CI and its MOs to gather materials from the MONA region for CI's 4th annual World Day of the Poor/World Youth Day week of prayer and action. The contributions were made by young people, both women and men; knowing that this Week of Prayer and Action picks up momentum each year! Now, the program reaches thousands of people, and helps the whole confederation to reflect on how and why we serve the poor and to share and celebrate the amazing contributions that young people make to Caritas every day.

Peacebuilding / PeaceMed

PEACEMED is a 12-month initiative project that stretches from December 2024 till November 2025. It is co-financed by the Italian government and supported by Caritas Italiana and Caritas Ambrosiana and in partnership with Caritas MONA. The project aims to promote peace as a common good and strengthen civil society organizations (CSOs) across the Mediterranean region, covering 20 countries including Italy, Greece, Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, and other countries.

The project operates through two main strategic objectives: enhancing CSOs' professional skills, and strengthening their governance in peace-building efforts. It will engage over 520 participants from 30+ CSOs through a comprehensive training program that includes online courses, workshops, a residential summer school in Italy, and cascade training sessions. A key deliverable is the development of a multilingual toolkit (in Italian, French, Arabic, and English) for community engagement and youth mobilization. The project will culminate in a regional conference in Tunis, establishing a permanent working group to coordinate future peace initiatives across the Mediterranean region.

Being implemented with expert support from an external institute specializing in peacebuilding and conflict management, the initiative particularly focuses on youth engagement and vulnerable communities, requiring participating CSOs to have at least 10 years of social sector experience and demonstrated expertise in educational project management.

Missions and meetings

RepCo - ExBO

The president (Msgr. Giorgio Bertin), the MONA region representative (Mr. Wael Souleiman) and the Regional Coordinator (Mr. Karam Abi Yazbeck) attended the 2 Representative Council (RepCo) meetings in May and November 2024. Being a member of the Executive Board (ExBo) of Caritas Internationalis, the Regional Coordinator attended as well all the meetings held during 2024.

Attending MOs' Partners' meetings:

Caritas MONA regional secretariat supported different member organizations in organizing and facilitating their partners meetings (i.e. Syria, Lebanon, Jerusalem, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania...). One example is the Caritas Egypt teleconference about Migrants/Refugees Situation and their Programs in Egypt. It was organized on October 22nd. The presentation started with an overview of the Egyptian context including the dire situation in Sudan and Gaza and their impact on the country, focused on Caritas Egypt's work, introducing its new strategic plan, providing an update on its current activities, its efforts to respond to the people's needs and its plans to scale up the response.

Regional Coordinators Meeting in Alexandria, USA

From September 9 till September 13 in 2024, the Regional Coordinator of Caritas MONA, participated in a five-day meeting with Caritas Regional Coordinators, hosted by Catholic Charities in Alexandria, USA. The meeting brought together coordinators from the seven Caritas regions; North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, Asia, and MONA, with Oceania represented by the CEO of Caritas New Zealand. This assembly provided a unique opportunity for direct interaction with key figures in the US Catholic charity landscape, including leadership from Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), and from Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

The primary goals of this gathering aimed to build stronger relations between regions and regional coordinators while learning about the realities in each region, the challenges, specificities and opportunities. The exchange on strategic issues at CI level to find common ground and gain understanding of one other's experiences and positions.

These objectives were successfully met through a combination of structured discussions, site visits, and informal exchanges. The coordinators engaged in frank conversations about regionalization, advocacy strategies, Catholic identity, and governance issues. They also shared experiences on practical matters such as HR management, membership fees, induction of MOs/staff, executive leadership training, youth engagement and finally women's participation.

A significant portion of the meeting was dedicated to exploring the evolving role of regions within Caritas Internationalis. The participants grappled with questions of autonomy, diversity, and the balance between regional initiatives and confederation-wide strategies. The concept of "fraternal cooperation" was thoroughly examined, particularly in the context of advocacy work and respecting regional specificities. The group also had the opportunity to meet virtually with the new CI-Secretariat Senior Management Team, discussing ways to enhance information exchange and clarify reporting lines between regional secretariats and the central office.

The meeting was unanimously considered a success, with participants highlighting the value of peer support, open dialogue, and the opportunity to gain firsthand insights into the work of Caritas in North America. The coordinators proposed holding a similar meeting next year. This initiative reflects a growing recognition of the value of regional perspectives and the importance of fostering direct relationships among regional leaders.

A highlight of the visit was the meeting with Msgr. Gabriele Caccia, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, which underscored the global reach and diplomatic significance of Caritas' work and Mr. Joe Donelli and the UN Working Group on Israel and Palestine.

SO3: CARITAS builds global solidarity

To address the causes of injustice and poverty by strengthening the MOs' communication and visibility to shed light on their solidarity actions

Communications:

This year, Caritas MONA developed a new 3-year communication strategy that aligns with its core organizational objectives. The strategy emphasizes measurable outcomes while upholding principles of transparency, ethical practices, and accuracy. As a practical implementation step, the organization standardized its visual identity by creating unified templates for the employees' business cards and email signatures helping to reinforce a cohesive and professional brand presence across all communications.

The organization expanded its social media presence beyond Facebook and X, by launching new Instagram and LinkedIn pages, to enhance community engagement. The communications portfolio has also grown, complementing its existing biannual newsletter, interim report and annual report, the organization is developing a new modern brochure that will showcase its Member Organizations' missions, intervention areas, and impact on communities.

Throughout all communications initiatives, Caritas MONA maintains its commitment to transparency and impactful messaging that catalyzes positive community change.

Advocacy for ceasefire, humanitarian assistance and peace, in the OPT and Lebanon:

Since October 2023, the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT) have been subjected to an unprecedented assault by the occupying powers. Gaza has been completely devastated, with a population of over 2 million people repeatedly displaced with no place to flee within this besieged strip of land, continuously bombarded and reduced to ruins, left without any infrastructure. The United Nations and international bodies also acknowledge that the famine imposed on Gaza has been used as a weapon of war. Binding decisions from the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court require states to take measures to prevent the war crimes occurring in Gaza and the West Bank. Yet, international powers remain passive, and this inaction has cost the lives of more than 45,000 people (those who have been identified), half of whom are children, while tens of thousands more remain trapped under the rubble. Caritas Jerusalem mourns the tragic loss of two staff members in Gaza, Viola Amash and Issam Abedrabbo, along with their families.

During the attacks on OPT, Caritas MONA continued to call for what it has demanded from the beginning: an unconditional ceasefire, the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, and the immediate cessation of the strategy aimed at starving the Palestinian people in Gaza. Now after the ceasefire, Caritas MONA still supports the urgent, unimpeded and large-scale delivery of humanitarian aid, as well as respect for international

humanitarian law and the rulings of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court for the long run. We also call for an arms embargo, the release of hostages from both sides, and the release of Palestinian prisoners held illegally in Israeli prisons. We would like to emphasize the crucial role of UNRWA, the only organization capable of ensuring the continued existence of the Palestinian people, and raise alarm about the ongoing attacks against it, from financial disengagement to the potential ban on its operations (a law to this effect has already been passed in Israel). No party or other organization can replace UNRWA today.

The war in the OPT has affected neighboring countries, including Syria, Jordan, Egypt, as well as Cyprus, Iraq, and even Djibouti, whether through direct Israeli airstrikes, the influx of refugees, or economic impacts. The Regional Secretariat has remained in close coordination with Caritas Lebanon, Caritas Jerusalem, and all other Caritas organizations affected or involved in responding to the damage caused by the war in the Middle East, providing regular communication and updates, tailored support, and assistance based on specific needs and requests.

The conflict has directly expanded into Lebanon, and intensified. Since October 2023, exchanges of fire have occurred along the southern border, but it was in September 2024 that a large-scale Israeli offensive specifically targeted “Hizbullah” in Lebanon. Following a strategy similar to that used in Gaza, this offensive primarily focused on civilian residences, destroying entire villages along the southern border, as well as entire neighborhoods in cities across Lebanon, such as Nabatiyeh, Baalbek, Tyre, and large parts of the capital, Beirut, extending even to the northern border with Syria.

Millions of displaced people found themselves overnight in precarious living conditions, housed in poorly equipped shelters in other regions of Lebanon, or struggling to secure housing and meet their basic needs. Humanitarian needs are enormous, as are the requirements for rebuilding infrastructure and homes that have been destroyed or are at risk of collapsing, especially given that Lebanon’s economic situation was already extremely fragile before this latest war. On November 27, 2024, a 60-day ceasefire came into effect, but the country remains in a state of desolation, with fragile security.

Caritas, as the social arm of the Church and a humanitarian organization, bases its advocacy on the values and principles of Catholic Social Teaching, particularly the equal dignity of all human beings, respect for life, as well as justice, the common good, and solidarity, especially with the poorest and most vulnerable.

Advocacy on Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCM):

Unilateral coercive measures (UCM) mainly refer to actions taken by one country or a group of countries without the approval of the international community, aimed at compelling a change in the policy of another state. While these measures are often seen as a tool of pressure on governments, their legality and effectiveness in achieving their stated goals are contested. In fact, they primarily affect civilian populations and have a significant humanitarian impact, particularly “on the full enjoyment of human rights set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular the rights of everyone to a standard of living adequate for

their health and well-being, including food and medical care, housing and necessary social services”, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

In the region, economic UCM include banking restrictions, the freezing of money transfers, trade embargoes that prevent the delivery of necessary humanitarian aid, as well as bans on raw materials, oil, medicines, reconstruction materials, technologies, and even essential consumer goods.

In recent years, Caritas MONA has been actively engaged in advocacy on the humanitarian impact of UCM on countries in the region suffering from them, including Syria, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Somalia.

In 2024, in addition to ongoing coordination through CI with Prof. Alena Douhan, the UN Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of UCM, Caritas MONA participated in Caritas Europa’s EU sanctions webinars with Prof. Douhan (February/March 2024), as well as the Human Rights Council Side Event on the Monitoring and Impact Assessment of UCMs and Overcompliance on the Enjoyment of Human Rights (September 2024).

In November 2024, Caritas MONA’s Regional Coordinator was invited as a keynote speaker, representing Caritas Internationalis, at the International Conference on Sanctions, Business, and Human Rights, organized within the framework of OHCHR. The conference aimed to bring together stakeholders to discuss, from a human rights-based perspective, the Guiding Principles on Sanctions, Business, and Human Rights developed by the Special Rapporteur’s mandate, and to address topics such as the obligations of public and private actors under international law, as well as ways to minimize overcompliance and promote and protect human rights. The statement presented by the Regional Coordinator was titled “Coping with the humanitarian impact of sanctions”.

SO4: CARITAS is a professional network

To strengthen MOs' capacity, reinforce organizational skills, improve the quality of partnership in a spirit of fraternal cooperation and promote Youth and Women involvement in communities' lives

Tables of the RS and MOs representatives in the CI committees, Governance bodies, Commissions, Working & Task Groups:

I- Committees

Committee	SO	Representative	MO	MONA focal point
Caritas Identity & Fraternal Cooperation Committee	1	Fr. Michel Abboud Saria Khabsa	C. Lebanon C. MONA	Saria Khabsa
Humanitarian Committee	2	Sarah El Hazeim Sylvia Eid	C. Syria C. MONA	Sylvia Eid
Integral Human Development and Integral Ecology	3	Pr. Manfred Lange Karam Abi Yazbeck	C. Cyprus C. MONA	Karam Abi Yazbeck
Institutional development Committee	4	Fr. Alvaro Sanchez Karam Abi Yazbeck	C. Morocco C. MONA	Karam Abi Yazbeck
Communications and fundraising committee	5	Harout Bedrossian Randa Egoda	C. Jerusalem C. MONA	Randa Egoda

II- Commissions

Commissions	Representative	MO	MONA focal point
Complaints Handling Commission	Elizabeth Kassinis	C. Cyprus	Sylvia Eid
Finance Commission (FINCO)	Nadim Nader	C. Lebanon	Karam Abi Yazbeck
Legal Affairs Commission (LAC)	Georges Kahhal (till Nov 24) Christine Azouri (as of Nov 24)	C. Syria C. Lebanon	Karam Abi Yazbeck
CI MS Review Commission	Sylvia Eid	C. MONA	Sylvia Eid

III- CI Governance Bodies

CI Governance Bodies	Representative	MO
Representative Council (RepCo)	Msgr. Giorgio Bertin	President of C. MONA
	Wael Suleiman	C. Jordan
	Karam Abi Yazbeck (Observer)	C. MONA
Executive Board (ExBo)	Karam Abi Yazbeck	C. MONA

IV- CI Working & Task Groups

CI WG / TG	SO	Representative	MO	MONA focal Point
Task Group Modus Operandi on Partnership and Fraternal cooperation	1	Riad Sargi	C.Syria	Karam Abi Yazbeck
Task Group Jubilee 2025	1&3	Adel Abou Loh	C. Syria	Saria Khabsa
Task Group Humanitarian Framework Review and implementation	2	Houshig Manuelian	C. Syria	Sylvia Eid
Working Group Safe and Dignified Programming	2	Mary Ramzy	C. Egypt	Sylvia Eid
Task Group Humanitarian Policy	2	Omar Abawi	C. Jordan	Sylvia Eid
Community of Practice Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation	2	Peter Mahfouz	C. Lebanon	Sylvia Eid
Working Group Climate Justice	3	Feras Badran	C. Jerusalem	Karam Abi Yazbeck
Working Group on Human Mobility	3	Sara Ben Rached Noha Roukoss	C. Somalia C. Lebanon	Sylvia Eid
Working Group Food Systems	3	Sr Edina Mary	C. Djibouti	Karam Abi Yazbeck
Task Group Health	3	Sofia Naffa	C. Jordan	Sylvia Eid
Working Group Women	4	Maje Martin	C. Morocco	Karam Abi Yazbeck

Working Group Youth	4	Rami Awwad	C. Jordan	Karam Abi Yazbeck
		Engy Zaher	C. Egypt	Karam Abi Yazbeck
Working Group Safeguarding	4	Mary Ramzy Sylvia Eid	C. Egypt C. MONA	Sylvia Eid
Working Group MEAL/Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning	4	Rasha Farouk Karam Abi Yazbeck	C. Egypt C. MONA	Karam Abi Yazbeck
Task Group Caritas Leadership	4	Sr Anita Martis	C. Mauritania	Karam Abi Yazbeck
Working Group Strengthening Parish Caritas	1	Carol Antanios	C. Jordan	Saria Khabsa
Task Group Induction program for Caritas Staff	1	Saria Khabsa	C. MONA	Saria Khabsa
Working Group Triple Nexus	2&3			Sylvia Eid
Task Group CI MS Review	4	Laith Bsharat Karam Abi Yazbeck	C. Jordan C. MONA	Karam Abi Yazbeck
Working Group Branding	5	Diana Haddad	C. MONA	Diana Haddad
Working Group Communications and Fundraising in Emergencies	5	Harout Bedrossian	C. Jerusalem	Diana Haddad
Task Group General Mapping	5	Sylvia Eid	C. MONA	Sylvia Eid
Task Group Artificial Intelligence	5	Bishara Shwayhat	C. Jordan	Randa Egoda
Task Group Fundraising and Communications Mapping of resources	5	Dana Shahin	C. Jordan	Diana Haddad

Empowering Women in Leadership: Caritas MONA and Fifty-Fifty's Regional Initiative

Caritas MONA, in collaboration with Fifty-fifty Association, has launched an innovative one-year initiative (September 2024 - September 2025) titled "Women in Leadership and Decision Making: Equality, Encounter, Renewal," which sets ambitious goals to empower women into decision-making roles while guiding female executives, increasing participation in male-dominated positions, and promoting workplace diversity, targeting 240 female staff.

The project will start in both Lebanon and Jordan, until now several meetings took place between Fifty-fifty organization and both Caritas Lebanon and Caritas Jordan. The structured five-phase approach started by conducting a detailed assessment to identify needs, will be followed by a curriculum development and hands-on workshops.

Through this strategic partnership's training program, the initiative expects to deliver significant outcomes including enhanced leadership capabilities, increased women's representation in management, and the establishment of a strong cross-country support network. The project's success will seek to create tangible improvements in organizational diversity, success stories, and the creation of a sustainable leadership development model that can be replicated across member organizations in the MONA region, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and effective leadership environment. The collaboration leverages Fifty-Fifty's expertise in gender equality and Caritas MONA's regional presence to maximize impact and ensure sustainable change in female leadership representation.

Legal Registration Process

The registration process initiated by the Caritas MONA Regional Secretariat through ALEM Law Firm represents a significant step in strengthening the organization's institutional credibility and operational capacity. By obtaining legal recognition, this certification will establish a strong legal framework, enhancing collaboration, resource sharing, and strategic coordination among member organizations. Caritas MONA will also reinforce partnerships with key CIMOs, faith-based organizations, NGOs, and government entities, while improving access to critical funding opportunities. With a clear governance structure and compliance mechanisms in place, the organization is composed to promote transparency, accountability, and more efficient decision-making. These developments position Caritas MONA as a leader in humanitarian and development efforts, enabling a more coordinated and impactful presence across the Middle East and North Africa region.

Strengthening the Capacity of Caritas MONA's Staff

Excel & Google Studio:

The Caritas MONA staff completed a capacity-strengthening program with the facilitator Joseph G. Youssef, enhancing their skills in Excel and Google Studio for data analysis and visualization. Through group and

individual sessions, the team boosted their efficiency and data-driven decision-making, leading to improved reporting and collaboration. This initiative has empowered the staff with valuable tools to better support Caritas MONA's mission and effectively serve Member Organizations in the future.

Integral Ecology:

The Caritas MONA team had an interesting session with Pr. Manfred Lange on November 07 about integral ecology. The meeting focused on the interconnected issues of water, food, energy, climate change, and environmental protection, particularly in the context of conflicts and emergency responses. Participants discussed the need for a comprehensive approach to address these challenges, including organizing workshops, developing strategies, and seeking partnerships with other organizations. The group agreed on the importance of raising awareness and taking concrete steps towards sustainability, with plans to create a concept paper for a regional project proposal.

Strengthening Organizational Development Capacities

Caritas MONA undertook an initiative to strengthen its organizational systems with the support from CRS capacity strengthening senior advisor Mr. Ramzi El Hage, who was part of the recruiting process of the institutional strengthening and business development expert, by setting tests, conducting interviews and finalizing the process. This new role will help to build capacity, identify funding, and promote strategic partnerships.

Moreover, Caritas MONA hired an external HR consultant for a 6-month period, to improve its Human Resource management and put in place an HR system for the office. These steps aim to increase sustainability and strengthen effectiveness in supporting member organizations across the region.

Strengthening Teamwork

The team participated in a workshop focused on improving the work environment and enhancing teamwork. Through collaborative activities, staff analyzed performance metrics, discussed ways to improve the atmosphere, and set SMART goals aligned with an organizational development plan. The plan outlines key objectives: creating a positive office environment, fostering teamwork with confidentiality and shared tools, and promoting shared responsibility through recognition. A 360-degree performance evaluation was recommended to provide holistic feedback for individual and organizational growth. This plan positions Caritas MONA. to strengthen its work culture, improve team cohesion, and promote shared responsibility.

Regional Commission's visit to Lebanon

The President (Bishop Giorgio Bertin) and the members of the Regional Commission of Caritas MONA (Fr. Solomon Ponraj Panneerselvam, Sr. Spéciosa Mukagatare, and Mr. Wael Victor Suleiman) visited the Regional Secretariat in Lebanon from July 22 to 24, 2024. During their meetings, the team had the privilege to share constructive insights and experiences.

During their mission, they visited the Apostolic Nuncio (Bishop Paolo Borgia), Archbishop Youssef Soueif, and Bishop Antoine Bou Najem. They also had the chance to meet with the Board of Directors of Caritas Lebanon, where they engaged in fruitful discussions.

These meaningful encounters strengthened bonds and reaffirmed shared commitment to serving those in need, as well as shared vision to build a more just and compassionate world.



Faith-Based MENA Actors for Climate Justice (FBC) and Biodiversity Meeting

On December 12, 2024, the FBC and Biodiversity group held an online meeting with representatives from various organizations, including ACT Alliance, Anglican Communion, Act Church of Sweden, Bread for the World, and others. The meeting emphasized the importance of collaboration, capacity building, and advocacy in addressing climate justice and biodiversity in the MENA region, while the approved agenda included a plan for the upcoming spring conference, sharing updates on climate and biodiversity work, and closing remarks.

IDCS (Institutional Development and Capacity Strengthening)/ CI MS (CI Management Standards)/ Safeguarding

The MONA IDCS Regional Committee

Caritas MONA has created its IDCS Regional Committee in 2019, with the mandate of accompanying the member organizations (MOs) in integrating the Caritas Internationalis Management standards (CIMS) with the ultimate aim of strengthening the MOs' organizational development. The mandate of this first Committee came to an end in December 2023. The Terms of Reference (ToRs) of the new IDCS Regional Committee were reviewed and adjusted in light of the Regional Secretariat's (RS) and CI's new Strategic Frameworks 2024-2030. Based on these changes, the new members were selected during the second quarter of 2024.

The new IDCS Regional Committee for the MONA Region held its first meeting from 11 to 13 June in Nicosia, Cyprus where the participants reviewed the proposed draft ToR and mandate of the IDCS Regional Committee, learned more about CI's Organizational Development Solidarity Fund; and reflected on ways to strengthen the capacities of the region's MOs. Moreover, the group started developing its draft Action Plan for the 2nd half of 2024 and 2025, by discussing the priorities, proposing activities, setting a realistic timeline, and accordingly distributing roles and responsibilities.



A mapping of expertise among the Committee members was conducted in the last quarter of 2024. At a later stage, the RS will identify the MOs' needs for accompaniment by cross-checking the topics in CI's Database with the MOs' priorities (based on their Improvement Plans). This will enable assigning a Committee member to accompany a given MO by matching the former area of expertise with the MO's need for capacity strengthening.

The IDCS Regional Committee hosted a 90-minute webinar on Wednesday, October 30, led by Mr. Paul Hanania, Head of the Internal Audit Department at Caritas Lebanon. The session focused on CI MS Auditing Good Practices 3.8 (1-2-3). Conducted in English, the training targeted Board members, Senior Management

Directors, Chief Financial Officers, and Managers from various MOs. Its primary goal was to provide participants with insights into CI MS Auditing standards and guide them on the necessary steps for their MOs to achieve or maintain compliance with these standards.

CI MS and Safeguarding

Throughout the year, the Regional Secretariat (RS) has continued to provide ongoing support and guidance to its MOs in their CI MS implementation process, as requested. This support included assisting with the preparation of self-assessments, the submission of documentation to CI, conducting the risk analysis and prioritization exercise (in their Organizational Development Tool - ORT) and accordingly developing their Improvement Plans (IPs). Additionally, the Regional CI MS and Safeguarding Officer helped three MOs prepare proposals for submission to CI's Organizational Development Solidarity Fund (ODSF). If granted, this funding would enable these MOs to implement their IPs and further strengthen their institutions. It is foreseen that at least 2 other MOs will be submitting funding requests to ODSF next year.

Caritas MONA submitted a proposal to the CI ODSF Improvement Fund, which will enable the RS to implement its Improvement plan over 24 months and hence strengthen its institutional development and positively impact that of its MOs. Also, Caritas MONA submitted a proposal to CI to receive funding aimed at empowering the regions.

Caritas MONA continues to be an active participant in both accompaniment committees formed to assist in the organizational development of Caritas Iraq and Caritas Mauritania alongside other partner CIMOs. Similarly, the RS maintains close support for Caritas Syria and in recent months Caritas Morocco.

The Caritas MONA Regional Coordinator co-facilitated a training workshop for CIMS Coordinators and Assessors, held in Manila, Philippines, from April 8-10, 2024. The workshop was attended by two coordinators and three assessors from four MOs: Jerusalem, Lebanon, Morocco, and Syria. Participants gained valuable insights and skills from the training, enhancing their capacity to apply CI MS effectively within their organizations, and in the region.

The Regional CI MS & Safeguarding Officer (RCSO) is a member of the CI MS Review Commission. She attended the in-person meeting in May and the online meetings, whereby she reviewed the external assessors' Reports for a number of MOs and contributed to the strategic thinking within the Commission.

The RCSO is handling safeguarding cases, in close coordination with CI's Senior Complaints Handling Officer (CHO), including conducting investigations, delivering reports and following up with plaintiffs while maintaining confidentiality and ensuring whistle-blowers' protection.

Also, the RCSO and CI CHO held meetings with the MONA representative within CI's Complaint Handling Commission, to update her on the cases from the region and reflect about steps to be taken.



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