



## CARITAS MONA's Regional Conference Election of the President and Regional Commission

Caritas MONA held its Regional Conference in Beirut, from March 7 to 9, 2023. The Regional Conference is the highest decision-making body of the Region, composed of the presidents and directors of the 14 Member Organizations (MOs), or their representatives; guests were also invited to attend the non-statutory sessions as well as Mrs Amparo Alonso, representing *Caritas Internationalis* (CI).

The program started with a spiritual reflection led by H.E. Msgr. César Essayan, Apostolic Vicar of the Latins in Lebanon, who opened up new perspectives on our mission and invited us to delve into the sources of our vocation to understand its specific significance for our time and for the people we are sent to serve. The afternoon of this first day was also dedicated to a presentation and sharing about the Catholic identity of Caritas, with a focus on our specific regional and diverse context, with Mr. Dominic Verhoeven, Director of Caritas in Belgium and Chairperson of the CI Catholic Identity Committee. Two days of discussions followed, tackling regional thematic priorities and commitments, and concluding with the adoption of the new 2024-2030 Strategic Orientations.

The last day was devoted to the elections of the President and Regional Commission. **H.E. Msgr. Giorgio Bertin** was elected as the new Regional President for a 4-year term, succeeding Mr. Gabriel Hatti who ended a double mandate of 8 years. Msgr. Bertin is also the President of Caritas Djibouti and Caritas Somalia.

The new regional commission will be composed of the following three Member Organizations (MO), representing the three different zones of the MONA Region: Caritas Djibouti for the Horn of Africa, Caritas Jordan for the Middle East and Caritas Tunisia for the North of Africa. Among the latter three, Caritas Jordan was selected to represent the Region, besides the Regional President, on the Representative Council (RepCo) of CI.



### CIMS Assessor's Forum in Beirut - March 2023

From 13 to 16 March, CI organized the first CI Management Standard (CIMS) Assessors' Forum after the term of their 4-year commitment done in 2019.

The forum gathered 20 assessors from 5 CI Regions (among which 3 from the MONA Region), whereby they exchanged experiences and lessons learned. The assessors raised their concerns and challenges faced while conducting the external assessment. There were sessions geared towards collecting suggestions on ways of improving the process for both the MOs and assessors having always in mind the Fraternal Cooperation approach. The last day was dedicated to a training on safeguarding to further improve the participants' general understanding and knowledge on the 5th Management Standard. This forum clearly conveyed the extent of the Confederation's commitment to help its MOs implement the Management Standards, which are viewed as a crucial tool to put in place systems that will contribute to reinforcing the MOs' Institutional Development on the long run.

On one of the shores of the busiest strait of the Indian Ocean, lies Malacca, the city through which Saint Francis Xavier passed on several occasions on his way to Canton, the Moluccas, Goa or Japan. In this unique place, 25 Caritas from the regions of Asia, Oceania, and MONA came together, from 28 to 31 March, convened by Caritas Internationalis.

With the aim of promoting Institutional Development, we learned to use a tool designed to guide us in the implementation of the CI MS. We also learned the methodologies of Self-Assessment, Risk Analysis and the design and monitoring of an Improvement Plan. Finally, we had a presentation on the Organisational Development Solidarity Fund (ODSF).

Professionalism and "formation of the heart" are priority, if we want to offer the best response to the most vulnerable human family. In Malacca we enjoyed getting to know each other better and praying together. This workshop has also provided us with a wonderful means to strengthen the resilience of the Confederation by improving accountability, stewardship, transparency and good governance.

*"Participating in this first assessors' forum in Beirut was a great opportunity, and meeting colleagues from different Caritas Member Organizations was also a benefit. Bringing participants into an interactive space motivated us in exchanging experiences throughout the external assessment process."*

*The facilitated working in groups helped us in addressing the challenges, identifying best practices, success, and proposing recommendations to strengthen the assessors' capacities and enhance the entire assessment process."*

Laith Bsharat – Caritas Jordan

### Together We Strengthen our Confederation IDCS Workshop in Malaysia



We concluded the workshop by gratefully celebrating these blessed gifts that help us nurture the dream of continuing our mission of service.

*"I initially thought the workshop would be a kind of CIMS & ORT (Organizational Review Tool) training. However, I was pleasantly surprised to be led to an amazing improvement strategy. The discussions, methodology and other added values made the workshop truly exceptional. I highlight the participatory approach and the combination of theoretical contents with practical sessions. Interregional exchange was also very enriching. It is very exciting to engage in a common effort to lead our Confederation to better standards."*

Alvar Sanchez, sj – Caritas Morocco

*"The IDCS workshop was a golden opportunity for me to update my knowledge and skills in issues related to prioritizing the management standards necessary to support and develop the organization in order to achieve its mission. Upon my return, this workshop was translated into an action plan to adopt the required management standards."*

Mary Ramzi – Caritas Egypt

## Capacity Strengthening in HR and Strategy

As part of its mandate, Caritas MONA is committed to reinforcing the capacities of its MOs through trainings, as well as via coaching and accompaniment. In the frame of IDCS (Institutional Development and Capacity Strengthening) related activities, Caritas MONA organized 2 workshops during the first half of the year 2023, based on the needs indicated by the concerned MOs.



### Strategic Planning for Caritas Iraq In Baghdad

A four-day workshop for Caritas Iraq was implemented by Caritas MONA in Baghdad (Iraq) from 20 till 23 February 2023, to support the senior staff, finance and programming department members within Caritas Iraq in setting a strategic plan. Mr. Ramzi Hage facilitated the workshop, assisted by Ms. Sylvia Eid. Twenty-five staff members and partners (from CRS, Caritas Germany & Fondazione Giovanni Paolo II) attended in-person while 2 persons were participating virtually. The group work was instrumental in defining the organization's new Vision and Mission, and identifying the thematic and geographic areas of interest. The main outcome was a draft 5-year Strategic plan that Caritas Iraq intends to start implementing in 2024.



### HR Management Workshop In Beirut for Caritas Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.

From 23 to 26 May 2023, Caritas MONA organized a workshop on Human Resources Management (HRM) in Beirut, Lebanon. This event intended to support the Human Resources departments within Caritas Iraq, Caritas Syria and Caritas Lebanon, and brought together 18 HR personnel from all 3 MOs over four days. This helped enrich the knowledge and exchange of experiences on the one hand, and on the other it contributed to reinforcing the cooperation and support among MOs of the same region. At the end of the workshop, each MO developed a draft action plan to improve the HRM practices and/or approaches based on the specific needs of their organization. The Regional Secretariat will consider accompanying the MOs in implementing their HR action plan further to their demand.

## News from Caritas Iran

Caritas Iran works in different provinces of the country to support people in need wherever it can.

Recent services included responses to emergencies such as assistance to Afghan refugees, support to populations affected by floods and earthquakes, and other ongoing projects such as those in favor of people suffering from spinal cord injuries.

In May 2023, Caritas Iran distributed 1,000 food baskets, 1,000 hygiene kits and 50 sets of a refrigerator, a fan, a small oven and 2 blankets to the most recently arrived Afghan refugees in the Golestan provinces, in the northeast of the country.

Caritas has been particularly attentive to the needs of students among them, to whom 240 pairs of shoes have been distributed. In the coming months, with the start of the new school year, 720 sets of stationery will be distributed to Afghan students, and food will be delivered to a school in the same Golestan province in order to prepare lunch for these students 5 days a week for a period of 5 months.

As part of the emergency response to the 2019 floods, Caritas Iran provided assistance to affected populations in 5 provinces, until December 2022.

The last activity of this project is to install solar panels and water pumps to draw water from wells to provide electricity and water to around 150 people from two small, remote and deprived villages in the Zarabad district of Chababar, in the southeastern province of Sistan & Balouchestan.



In the western province of Kermanshah, on the Iraqi border, Caritas has completed the construction of 30 sanitary services for needy families affected by the earthquakes, and built 5 houses for families of members with disabilities.

Caritas Iran also has continuing projects for people with spinal cord injuries, in the city of Bam. These projects include nursing services and medical treatment, as well as the distribution of food baskets and hygiene kits when needed. Twenty sanitary facilities for disabled people have also been installed for families living in poverty in this town.



**When the desert blooms...**

**News on Caritas Mauritania's project to promote access to rights and reintegration of prisoners**

Based on the Laudato Si' action platform, Sr Nilima Minj, the animator at the women's prison in Nouakchott, came up with the idea of creating a beautiful space near the prison to plant a vegetable garden.

This garden has become a real place of encounter and discussion with the detained women.

"I realized that the surrounding nature and the time and process of growing vegetables together with the women at the detention center allowed life to express itself strongly, in connection with nature. The creation of this garden was like an act of reparation, opening up a space for sharing, listening, relaxing and exchanging ideas and opinions.

It taught us great lessons and gave the women who contributed to it the opportunity to forget a little of the stress and pain of being separated from the world, which brought us closer to the Laudato Si vision of integral ecology", says Sr Anita Martis, Vice-Director of Caritas Mauritania.



This year, we were able to harvest a lot of fresh vegetables. These were used in the kitchen, where the women were also taught not only about farming techniques, but also how to prepare balanced meals. The women also learned how to make tomato jam and various other ways of preserving and consuming these vegetables, which they greatly appreciated and found motivating. The project also improved local biodiversity, with indigenous plants and pollinators, always with a view to safeguarding Creation and integral ecology.

Caritas Mauritania



## More urban farming initiatives supporting the community

### Caritas Djibouti's Vertical Garden Project

Caritas Djibouti, like the whole country, is affected by drought and food insecurity. The vertical vegetable garden is an initiative that was therefore conceived and launched, among others, by Caritas staff, inspired by Pope's message on **Hope for the Earth, Hope for Humanity** with the aim:

- ◆ To collectively contribute to food and nutrition security
- ◆ To enjoy a constant supply of fresh nutritious vegetables for Caritas beneficiaries
- ◆ To reduce the high expenses on imported vegetables
- ◆ To use the garden as a teaching aid for Caritas' beneficiaries and to other people who have no idea or think it is not possible to do farming in the urban areas
- ◆ Environment friendly

On a tiny space Caritas Djibouti has found a possibility to establish kitchen garden structures that enable the use of the vertical space for growing vegetables like Tomatoes, Spinach, Onions, Amaranth, beetroot etc.

At present Caritas Beneficiaries are enjoying the fresh nutritious Amaranth greens that have numerous healthy benefits, being high in calcium, in Vitamin A, folic acid and zinc.

Caritas Djibouti intend by the end of the year 2023 to **empower 15 families** within the city on vertical vegetable garden.

Caritas will also make a move to give support in establishing vertical **vegetable gardens in learning institutions** which will be used for teaching purposes.



## Earthquake emergency response in Syria

In the early hours of February 6, a devastating earthquake struck Turkey and Syria, claiming many lives and forcing thousands to abandon their homes in seconds.

This tragedy made headlines around the world: we all saw towns reduced to dust and lived to the rhythm of the search for survivors, in the middle of winter.

Today, winter has passed and the media have turned their attention to other subjects, but, as with all major crises, the needs on the ground remain, and human lives in all their dimensions are affected.

It is alongside these people that Caritas Syria continues to respond as much as possible to the emergency, in the areas of Damascus, Aleppo, Latakia and Homs, with the support of *Caritas internationalis* and other partners, despite limited means and difficulties in delivering the necessary aid.

Caritas Syria began the immediate response with a blood donation campaign, followed by the distribution of basic necessities to survivors: ready-to-eat food items, bread, water bottles, hygiene kits, mattresses, blankets, duvets, clothes and shoes.

Caritas Syria recently launched a donation campaign to continue helping the population of the affected areas.



## Churches in the Middle East, Rooted in Hope Symposium in Nicosia, Cyprus

Ten years after Pope Benedict XVI's post-synodal apostolic exhortation [Ecclesia in Medio Oriente](#) (2012), delegates from the Eastern Catholic Churches met in Nicosia from April 20 to 23, 2023, for a symposium entitled "Churches in the Middle East, Rooted in Hope". The Patriarchs of the Eastern Catholic Churches were also present, along with bishops, members, clergy and laypeople, from each of these churches, ROACO agencies and a delegation from the Dicastery for the Oriental Churches. Caritas MONA was invited to attend the event.

The purpose of the event was to re-examine the calls of the document in the light of the present situation of the region's countries and churches, and to consider the future together. A number of speakers were invited to share their reflections and expertise. These contributions often intersected and complemented each other, as they were discussed in working groups and plenary sessions. Recommendations were proposed on the following topics: Christian education, Interreligious dialogue, Ecumenism, Citizenship, Governance in the Church, Youth, Women and Emigration.



## Appointment of a new Supervisor Bishop for Caritas Lebanon

H.E. Msgr. Antoine Bou Najem, Archbishop of the Maronite Diocese of Antelias, has been appointed Supervisor of Caritas Lebanon, as Caritas Lebanon refers to APECL, the Assembly of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops of Lebanon. Msgr. Bou Najem succeeds Msgr. Michel Aoun, Archbishop of Jbeil (Byblos).

May the Lord inspire and strengthen him for this new service!



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