

# NEWSLETTER



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## Editorial

*by Msgr. Giorgio Bertin, President of Caritas MONA*

Dear friends,

You will agree with me that this Newsletter is being published at a very difficult, not to say turbulent, time in our Region: earthquake in Morocco, floods in Libya, war in the Holy Land, not to mention the very difficult situation in Syria, Yemen, Sudan (which is not in our Region, but whose many refugees are fleeing to Egypt), and in almost all the other countries that form our Region.

Amid all these bad news, there are nonetheless signs of hope: meetings with our partners in Cairo and Tunis tell us how much we are brothers in humanity, in Jesus, in hope, in commitment, in charity! Yes, we mustn't let evil prevail over our lives: it is there, but our faith, our hope, our fraternity must be stronger and more persistent than evil.

I therefore invite you to read this Newsletter carefully, for it seeks to capture both suffering and hope, and appeals to our humanity.

But I don't want to end this editorial without recalling the name of a President of our Region who has just passed away: Father Henri Boulad, who left for Heaven last June. It was with him, in fact, that our Region began to have a more precise "identity", and our Secretariat began to "take shape", in Cairo, as we left the office we had at Caritas Internationalis. I also remember how, in the early 1990s, Father Boulad came to the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Djibouti, Yemen) and then opened me up to the "world" by accompanying me to Rome, Brussels and Paris: he made me understand that Caritas must be open to media and political advocacy, on the basis of human dignity and justice. May he continue to help and inspire us.



Photo @Caritas Egypt

### Joint Partners Meeting in Cairo and Tunis

For the second year running, and in response to requests from its member organizations (MOs), Caritas MONA organized joint partner meetings by zone. The first meeting took place in Cairo from September 4 to 7, 2023, for the Middle East MOs and their partners from the rest of the Confederation. The second meeting was held in Tunis on October 2-3, 2023, for the North Africa and Horn of Africa zones.

These meetings are an excellent opportunity for the region to consolidate mutual knowledge and build common orientations between MOs and with partners. It is also an occasion for the Regional Secretariat to present its activity report and action plan to the Region, and to gather recommendations.

During the discussions, regional themes such as Institutional Development & Capacity Strengthening (IDCS), Management Standards (CIMS), communication or advocacy were addressed according to the challenges and interests of the Caritas organizations. This year, three recent emergencies were highlighted: the refugee crisis in Sudan by Caritas Egypt, the emergency response to the earthquake by Caritas Morocco, and the humanitarian intervention in Libya. Bilateral meetings also enabled interested MOs to discuss certain topics in more detail with their partners.

In Cairo the Caritas Secretary General Mr. Alistair Dutton was present, as was CI's Emergency Response Team Leader Mr. John Coughlin. Mr. Coughlin informed the participants about the toolkits and protocols to be used in case of emergency and updated them on the activities concerning localization and fraternal cooperation carried out at Confederation level.

This year's main topic was Localization and Resource Mobilization. Ms. Esther Kauffman, CRS Regional Technical Advisor in Corporate Development, analyzed the main trends in international development funds (sectors, operations, etc.) and Ms. Silvia Sinibaldi, Deputy Director of Caritas Italiana, gave an overview of localization, equitable partnership and subsidiarity from

a European perspective (online). Ms Kaufmann also intervened on the second day on resource mobilization and the business development cycle, moderating both workshops and plenary sessions. The last day of the meeting was also an opportunity for participants to visit Caritas Egypt centers in Cairo: the community center - Kafar Al Sissi, the refugee project - Garden City and the Caritas SETI (Support, Education, Training for Inclusion) center - Heliopolis.

In Tunisia, two interventions focused on current issues: Dr Elie Abou Aoun, Director of the International Rescue Committee in Libya, addressed the socio-economic and migratory situation in the North African zone, and Mr. Rom Dhane Ben Amor, official spokesman for FTDES (Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social rights), focused more closely on the Tunisian context, particularly from a legal, mediatic and social point of view.

As in Cairo, Ms. Silvia Sinibaldi intervened online and gave an overview of localization, equitable partnership and subsidiarity from a European perspective. P. Jawad Amat, World President of Catholic Schools, presented the challenges of education and transmission of values in a globalized world.

In Tunis, in addition to the MOs, the partners too presented the areas of interest and intervention of their programs, enabling an even more balanced exchange; a good practice to remember for future meetings.

Finally, the Regional Secretariat took the opportunity to organize its own partners' meeting in Cairo on the afternoon of September 6. Achievements, challenges and future plans were presented and discussed, following which partners will examine ways of supporting the Regional Secretariat to ensure greater sustainability.



Photo @Caritas Tunisia



### IDCS and CIMS News

The Regional Secretariat (RS) being expected to integrate the CI Management Standards process in the same way as the CI MOs, Caritas MONA conducted its self-assessment in August and was externally assessed in September.

The RS will therefore develop its improvement plan for the next 4 years accordingly.

Besides, the RS has continued to offer its support and accompaniment to its MOs in the CI MS implementation process, whether in the preparation of their self-evaluations, the submission of their documentation to CI, or for the development and implementation of their respective improvement plans following the validation of their external evaluation.

Caritas MONA is a member of two accompaniment committees formed to assist and strengthen the organizational development of Caritas Iraq and Caritas Mauritania.

Ms. Sylvia Eid, the CI MS and Safeguarding Regional Focal Point organized as well a safeguarding workshop for Caritas Tunisia and the Diocese of Tunisia in close collaboration with the CI Safeguarding Officer, Mr Elie Bassila. The main objective of this workshop was to clarify the role of the Diocesan Commission for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons which will handle the complaints.

The two-day event included a refresher on the definition of safeguarding, prevention tools, response tools, communication plans to raise awareness on the subject and ways of mainstreaming safeguarding in education (Tunisia's Catholic schools being part of diocesan structures).

Lastly, the two facilitators discussed with Caritas Tunisia the next steps for developing their improvement plan based on the results of their external assessment. A plan was drafted to closely accompany them over the coming months and will be implemented as of January 2024.



### ROACO Youth Conference – Rome 2023

From June 16 to 23, 2023, 32 young people aged 18 to 30, representing their Eastern Catholic Churches, took part in the ROACO Youth Conference held in Rome. Caritas MONA helped co-organized the event. From the Middle East, participants came from Cyprus, Egypt, Holy Land, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria and represented the following catholic churches: Armenian, Byzantine (Greek Melkite), Chaldean, Coptic, Latin, Maronite and Syriac. The other young people present came from other parts of the world and represented several other Eastern churches.

A precious opportunity to share experiences, discuss ideas and initiatives, and make their voices heard within the Church on how to better engage and serve the common good in each of their countries.

## War in the Holy Land



We are alarmed by the escalation of hostilities in Gaza.

We cannot go back to the decades of violations of human rights and international law,  
But today, along with Caritas Internationalis, other Caritas organizations and humanitarian  
associations, Caritas MONA continues to appeal

to the international community to **intensify diplomatic action**

to give effect to an **immediate ceasefire**,

and to grant **safe unimpeded humanitarian access** to allow the delivery of sufficient lifesaving  
assistance, including **food, water, medicine and fuel**.

**International law, humanitarian law and human rights law must be enforced.**

**Civilians and civilian infrastructures must be protected.**

People have the right to live in **dignity and freedom**.

Every possible effort to achieve a **just peace** that tackles the **root causes** of the situation is  
required.

## Caritas Morocco - Earthquake Relief

On September 8, 2023, a devastating earthquake struck Morocco, claiming over 3,000 lives, while causing serious damage in villages of the High Atlas, a poor and difficult to access region. It is estimated that 56,000 houses were damaged, 35% of which were completely destroyed. Individuals and families lost not only their loved ones, but also their homes and livelihoods. Infrastructures were destroyed, as were health centers and schools. With winter approaching, the situation will be even more critical for displaced people.

In the wake of this tragedy, Caritas Morocco, in collaboration with local parishes, partners and volunteers, and with the support of the Confederation's sister Caritas organizations, integrated a rapid response to meet the immediate and long-term needs of those affected.

In the midst of the rubble, Caritas Morocco was there to provide assistance to the affected people, but also human proximity and hope. The Organization was far from thinking that it would one day be faced with a disaster of this magnitude. Initially, it was with the means at hand that two people from Caritas took a car and went to the site, in a remote but accessible village, with a few donations collected from the parish, food and blankets; the sending of a first convoy was then decided, transporting a generator, clothes, first aid kits, food, medicine and tents.

Quickly, a coordination mechanism was put in place with the Caritas Internationalis emergency team, the MONA regional secretariat and the Caritas sister organizations. Experts were sent on site to help assess the needs and the possibilities for action and to assist Caritas Morocco in coordinating its emergency response with partners.



Initially the most urgent task was to provide basic necessities, food, clothing and shelter, as well as sanitary facilities (toilets) to prevent the spread of disease. Beyond this immediate intervention, Caritas follows the principle of first targeting the most vulnerable and least accessible populations. Caritas Morocco's intervention will therefore focus on the most isolated areas where no aid is reaching, namely the center and south of the High Atlas (Ouarzazate and/or Taroudant).

During the exploratory missions carried out by Caritas, the following sectors were identified as priorities:

- Temporary shelters adapted to winter conditions, and houses.
- Essential household items: heating equipment, domestic kitchens and household items for families living in relocation camps.
- Sanitation and hygiene: Installation of toilets and showers in relocation camps. Adapted hygiene kits for women and children (0-3 years). Community workshops on hygiene and waste management tools in relocation camps.
- Livelihoods: repair and reconstruction tools for agriculture and housing.

The other sectors are no less important but they are more widely supported by the state and NGOs. This is the case for food security, health, psychosocial support or education.

At the same time, Caritas Morocco is continuing its program to help migrants (mainly sub-Saharan Africans), many of whom were among those affected by the earthquake.





Caritas Lebanon places health at the heart of its priorities and strives to achieve strategic objectives that reflect its humanitarian and social vision. Through its health department, comprising ten Primary Health Care Centers (PHCCs) and nine Mobile Medical Units (MMUs) spread across all Lebanese regions, Caritas Lebanon aims to ensure that people, without distinction, receive the care they need and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Based on the principle of solidarity, Caritas Lebanon continues to expand its scope of action to provide essential health services to deprived communities.

As a result, and despite the precarious conditions prevailing in South Lebanon due to the war situation, the Caritas team has made exceptional efforts to reach areas where many citizens have not left their homes despite persistent security challenges. This was made possible by the emergency disaster strategy developed and planned by Caritas Lebanon Youth's "Emergency Intervention Unit".

Caritas Lebanon therefore took the initiative of organizing medical campaigns at its clinics in Sidon and Tyre, deploying all its logistical capacities to provide the residents of these regions with basic healthcare and medicines. This initiative reflects Caritas' unwavering commitment to vulnerable populations, even in areas most affected by conflict.

Furthermore, Caritas is committed to providing hospitalization assistance to those most in need. In 2023, and given the financial constraints that health emergencies can impose in these difficult times, Caritas covered part of the hospitalization costs of many individuals and families.

## Caritas Lebanon, actively involved in healthcare.

In addition to mobile clinics distributing medicines, Caritas' efforts focused on the free medical campaigns it organizes in various regions, with the aim of reaching citizens who do not have the means to visit the organization's health centers.

The organization provided beneficiaries with medical consultations supervised by doctors specialized in all fields, dental care services, as well as laboratory tests, vaccines and medicines, in the context of its prevention and disease-fighting efforts.

Moreover, in the aftermath of the earthquake in Syria and Turkey, 15 volunteers from the Caritas Youth Emergency Response Unit (ERU) headed to Syria to take part in search and rescue operations and humanitarian missions in the areas affected by the disaster, in coordination with Caritas Syria and Caritas Internationalis.

The ERU team is made up of 175 volunteers, who carried out around 480 missions in 2023, in addition to organizing training sessions and awareness-raising sessions, as well as other emergency missions.

Caritas Lebanon



*Photos @Caritas Lebanon*

*Interventions in South Lebanon & Mobile Medical Units*

## Yemen humanitarian response by Caritas Poland

Yemen is part of the Caritas MONA Region, which also includes the Gulf countries. At Church level, the country depends on the Vicar of South Arabia, H.E. Msgr. Paolo Martinelli, and does not yet have a national Caritas. Some local and foreign NGOs are on the ground to help the population, like CRS and Caritas Poland, which is now registered there.

Yemen remains a country in the throes of war, and has been experiencing one of the biggest humanitarian crises on the planet: over 2/3 of the population requires humanitarian assistance, i.e. almost 25 million people, of whom almost 4 million are still displaced. Food insecurity is alarming, as is access to drinking water. Health facilities are barely working at half of their capacity. All this has led to the outbreak of major diseases such as cholera.

In view of this situation, Caritas Poland started a humanitarian response in 2019 by organizing aid for Yemeni refugees in Djibouti. In 2020, Caritas Poland received authorization to operate in Yemen as a donor, and the implementation of their projects was carried out through a local partner. Interventions were either programs funded by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or emergency appeals funded by members of the Caritas confederation. The main aim was to reduce mortality and morbidity and generally improve health, hygiene, sanitation and create conditions for safe motherhood through interventions in targeted health facilities.



In 2022, Caritas Poland's official mission was established in Aden and direct implementation began. The office hired more than a dozen qualified humanitarian aid workers (all Yemeni nationals), whose work is managed by the Head of Mission, an expat from Poland. The new team co-designs and implements the humanitarian program in coordination with the Yemeni Ministry of Health and other state bodies.

In 2023, direct implementation through the Emergency Appeal continues. Five health facilities in Aden governorate are targeted. As in previous interventions, the main focus is on the health sector, with a WASH component.

The intervention is carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Health and Population, local health authorities and coordinated with the NGO health group. Health centers are supported through minor rehabilitation, incentives for social workers, the purchase of medicines, consumables, laboratory solutions, medical and non-medical equipment, etc. Sixty thousand people are expected to benefit from these services.



*Photos @Caritas Poland*

*Caritas Poland team at al-Memdara HF's medicine depot*

## Floods in Libya

The floods that hit Libya on the night of September 10-11, 2023 were unbelievably powerful, sweeping away entire villages and leaving behind a landscape of desolation. The need for immediate relief was crucial. At a teleconference organized by CI and Caritas MONA, the CI Member Organizations had the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the situation. Dr Elie Bouaoun gave an overview of the specificities and needs of the context, and H.E. Msgr. Sandro Rigillo, the Latin bishop of Benghazi, the region most severely affected by the floods, described the situation and answered questions about the necessary and possible assistance.

Bishop Rigillo also explained how the local Church had responded to the disaster.

In the early hours of the morning, he visited the scene of the disaster to try to provide some support to those affected and afflicted, despite the few means at his disposal. Together with a group from the parish's Asian community, they brought blankets, food and sweets for the children, and made their way to the Derna region, taking a detour because the main road no longer existed. There, they were able to see for themselves the scale of the disaster.

In coordination with H.E Msgr. George Bugeja, Apostolic Vicar of Tripoli and President of Caritas Libya, and with the support of Caritas organizations, further humanitarian interventions were planned and carried out within the capacities of local Caritas.

## Caritas Jordan – Livelihood Project

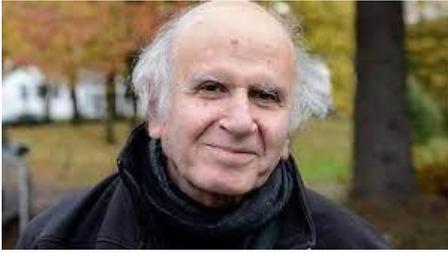


Photo @Caritas Jordan

Caritas Jordan has been providing assistance to Iraqi refugees in the country for almost 10 years. Initially, this was mainly an emergency program aimed at meeting the high cost of living, housing, health, education and psychosocial needs. The emergency program soon evolved to include projects offering more sustainable solutions. Caritas Jordan is also committed to fighting poverty among the Jordanian population, assisting those most in need in various aspects of their lives.

Among these projects was a vocational training course in agriculture in which 30 beneficiaries, both Iraqi and Jordanian, were involved. The project took place at the Our Lady of Peace Center in Amman and aimed to provide participants with vocational skills in agriculture, food preparation and manufacturing, product classification, packaging and labeling. Participants then underwent practical training in various workshops. These provided the beneficiaries with the opportunity to apply the training topics and acquire the skills needed to manage small-scale projects, in line with the objectives of the project funded by the ARCS Organization for Culture and Development in collaboration with Caritas Jordan.

Last summer, a closing ceremony was held in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and ARCS. The Caritas livelihoods project team presented the results and achievements and played a short video highlighting all the work that had been accomplished during the implementation period.



### Fr. Henri Boulad passed away

On June 14, we were saddened to learn of the death of Father Henri Boulad s.j. in Cairo at the age of 91.

Born in Alexandria in 1931 to Syrian-Lebanese parents, Henri Boulad grew up in Egypt until he entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus in Bikfaya (Lebanon) in 1950. After studying philosophy and theology in France and Lebanon, he was ordained a priest in the Melkite Catholic Church and returned to Egypt, where he taught at the Jesuit College of the Holy Family (Cairo), of which he also became Rector. An educator, preacher, lecturer, and author of numerous spiritual books, Father Boulad is known for his commitment to the most vulnerable persons, both Christian and Muslim, and for his defense of the cause of Christians in the East.

Father Henri Boulad was Director of Caritas Egypt from 1984 to 1995, and a member of its Board of Directors until 2022. He was also President of Caritas MONA from 1991 to 1995. During his mandate, the Caritas MONA secretariat was moved from Algiers to Cairo and began to acquire its actual structure, by becoming autonomous from the C.I. secretariat.



### Creation of the new “Caritas Morocco”

On July 4, 2023, the Archbishops of Rabat and Tangier, Cristobal Lopez Romero, sdb and Emilio Rochaa Grande, ofm, officially proceeded to the constitution of Caritas Morocco.

In the Archbishopric of Rabat, they signed the previously approved Statutes, which is the act by which Caritas Morocco begins its journey and becomes part of the Caritas Internationalis Confederation, currently made up of the national Caritas of 162 countries.

### Sr. Anita Martis, director of Caritas Mauritania

On October 10, 2023, Sister Anita Martis was appointed Director of Caritas Mauritania by the Bishop of Nouakchott, H.E. Msgr. Martin Happe, on whose authority Caritas depends in the country.

Sister Anita is an Indian nun from the Congregation of the Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany and has been in Mauritania for 21 years. She will officially take office on November 1st, 2023, succeeding Mr. Benoît Boulangé.

We wish Sr Anita a fruitful mandate and would like to thank Benoît for his dedication to Caritas Mauritania and wish him all the best for the future!

