

EDITORIAL

by Msgr. Giorgio Bertin, President of Caritas MONA



As we walk towards the end of this year 2025, we pause to reflect on the path that has brought us here, a path marked by faith, service, and steadfast commitment to those most in need. Across the Caritas MONA network, our shared mission continues to take shape through the daily efforts of teams and volunteers who embody compassion in action.

This moment also invites us to look back with gratitude at our common journey. The History of Caritas MONA, which has been carefully documented and will be presented during the upcoming meeting of the Representative Council (RepCo), stands as a testimony to decades of dedication, collaboration, and solidarity. It tells the story of how our network was built: acts of service, of partnership, and gestures of humanity at a time. Preparing this history has required a collective effort from all of us, and it serves as both a reminder of our roots and an inspiration for what lies ahead.

As we honor our past, we must not forget the present. People on the move, forced to flee their homes, continue to suffer daily from violence and hardship on many fronts. Caritas MONA was present in Rome for the Jubilee of Migrants and Missionaries, which took place this October, reminding us of these people in need and shedding light on Caritas' valuable work throughout the MONA region. This work continues to offer hope, dignity, and new beginnings, providing accompaniment where it is most needed.



Yet we cannot look to the future without acknowledging the new and challenging phase unfolding in the Holy Land. The suffering and uncertainty that so many have endured call us once again to strengthen our commitment to reconciliation and peace. Thanks to the tireless efforts of many, steps toward peace have been taken, a peace we deeply long for, praying that it will be reached and will endure. As Caritas, we remain close to those affected by war, conflicts and lack of food, guided by our faith in the Risen Lord and compassion, believing that dialogue, justice, and solidarity can sustain our efforts for peace and overcome divisions.

May this edition of our newsletter serve as a bridge between our past achievements, our commitments and future aspirations. As we continue walking together, may we do so with gratitude for our shared history, with courage for the challenges ahead, and with unwavering hope in the power of love to transform lives.

Regional Conference

Caritas MONA held its 2025 Regional Conference at Notre Dame Du Mont, Fatka, Lebanon on June 9–12. The first two days were attended by Member Organizations (MOs) and focused on introductory session on synodality and fraternal cooperation, the ongoing office registration processes, Caritas MONA history document and the two-year (2023-2025) mandate of the Regional Secretariat, on which the MOs have reflected, highlighting the positive impact and the increased technical expertise and accompaniment at the regional level, while addressing suggestions and feedback to the regional team for the upcoming period.

The regional team presented Caritas MONA Action Plan for 2025-2026 that will be amended and sent to the MOs for further input and feedback. Moreover, an intervention from the CI Secretary General, Alistair Dutton, on the geopolitical changes in the region and global issues, such as debt and funding crisis. At the end, a Leadership Orientation Workshop led by the director of Confederation Development at CI, Moira Monacelli, addressed organizational values and leadership challenges and shared best practices. The overall feedback received by the MOs was positive and appreciative.

As for the last two days, Caritas' partners joined for Member Organizations' presentations, sharing overviews of their national missions, achievements, projects, challenges, future plans, and calls for collaboration, followed by interactive discussions. Additional sessions included a discussion on "Geopolitical Challenges & Their Impact on Humanitarian Work in the Region and Future Strategies / Advocacy Priorities" led by UNOCHA's MENA Head, Severine Rey, which explored humanitarian financing, localization, access, advocacy, and donor engagement.

Lastly, Christian Modino, CI Humanitarian Director, discussed the effects of funding freezes and strategies for adapting to aid cuts, followed by group work discussing how National Caritas can prepare and mitigate the impact of this crisis and the support needed from the CI General Secretariat and Regional Secretariat. The feedback received on the forum demonstrated a high appreciation, highlighting the opportunity to connect, share experiences and engage in meaningful discussions with other participants.



Capacity Strengthening Project (CSP)

Over the past two years, the CSP project has been implemented in two phases. The first phase focused on promoting ecumenical dialogue among churches and encouraging collaborative efforts to serve people communally. The second phase aims to strengthen the capacities of the region's MOs by deepening their understanding of Caritas Identity and Mission, alongside the core principles of Catholic Social Teaching. Furthermore, it seeks to integrate synodality, inclusive participation, and Ecumenical and Interreligious collaboration into programs and leadership management, thereby promoting unity, shared values, and joint actions for the common good.

As part of the project implementation, Caritas MONA, with the support of Caritas Iraq, conducted a four-day workshop in Zakho, Iraq, from September 29 to October 2, 2025. The event was attended by 20 participants from the region and addressed sessions on Caritas identity, values and principles, Synodality, Partnership, and Fraternal Cooperation.

On the first two days of the workshop, Moira Monacelli, Director of the Confederation Development Department of the Caritas Internationalis General Secretariat, presented Caritas principles including subsidiarity, synodality and walking with people. She clarified that Caritas is not merely an NGO, but a community of love rooted in the Church's mission to serve, accompany, and defend the poor.



The See-Judge-Act methodology was presented as a person-centered approach, designed to address individuals' needs through systematic assessment and analysis.

On the third day, the primary focus was on Synodality-Walking-Together. Group discussions explored this concept by referencing three principles: Communion, Participation, and Mission, with an emphasis on listening with humility and speaking from the heart. The last session addressed Caritas Partnership Principles and Modus Operandi, highlighting the importance of collaboration, subsidiarity, and shared responsibility across the Confederation.

The last day was dedicated to support the participants in developing a Caritas Synodal work Plan to be implemented during this second phase of the project. In addition, Caritas MONA will be accompanying the three pilot Caritas MOs, Caritas Lebanon, Djibouti and Syria throughout the project cycle. Lastly, Maria Jesus Martin from Caritas Morocco delivered a presentation highlighting Caritas' commitment to women's leadership and participation.



MOs Accompaniment

Caritas Syria accompaniment

From 15 to 17 July 2025, Caritas MONA conducted a three-day Strategic Planning Workshop for Caritas Syria at the Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarchate in Damascus. This workshop was facilitated in response to Caritas Syria's request and made possible through the support of several Member Organizations. The event brought together participants from across Syria —Hasakeh, Homs, Aleppo, and Damascus— as well as representatives from Caritas Switzerland, Caritas Italiana, Caritas Austria, CRS, and others, and attended by Caritas Syria's Director, Mr. Riad Sargi, and President, Bishop Georges Masri, whose presence underscored the importance of this initiative.

Over the course of three days, participants engaged in a comprehensive strategic planning process, including a review of Caritas Syria's history, analysis of internal and external contexts, evaluation of vision, mission, and values, and developing SMART strategic objectives, Key Performance Indicators, risk management strategies, and a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework. The outcome was a robust five-year strategy that reflects the collective insights and aspirations of all stakeholders involved.

The facilitation and success of the workshop were supported by Ramzi Hage from Caritas MONA, with significant contributions from his colleagues Sylvia Eid and Laith Bisharat, whose coordination and technical inputs ensured effective and smooth facilitation.

Caritas Morocco accompaniment

The Regional Coordinator, Mr. Karam Abi Yazbeck, conducted an official visit to Caritas Morocco from August 18 to August 21, 2025, with main objectives to 1) assist in the Caritas Internationalis Management Standards' (CIMS) external assessment, 2) engage with the governance and the management team to outline priorities for their improvement plan, and 3) brainstorm ideas for the empowerment of the National Office. Additionally, during his visit, Karam facilitated an orientation session for the National Office staff on Caritas Identity and the confederation structure.

Youth Forum



The Caritas Internationalis Youth Forum took place in Rome, Italy, from 24 to 27 July 2025, bringing together young representatives from the seven Caritas' regions worldwide. The MONA Regional Secretariat was represented by one team member, who joined four other regional delegates to present the MONA region. The Forum was organized by CI and aimed to strengthen youth engagement in humanitarian and social work, facilitate the exchange of experiences, and build a shared vision for the future, turning hope into action.

The MONA delegates presented 6 key youth realities across 15 countries—including Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco and Syria. They highlighted youth-led initiatives in relief assistance, economic empowerment, and peacebuilding, while addressing challenges faced within the region. Additionally, the delegates introduced a draft mission and vision for a MONA Regional Youth Network,



GAZA

Caritas MONA has been supporting Caritas Jerusalem, particularly regarding the situation in Gaza and West Bank, by engaging in regional advocacy to promote respect for and implementation of international humanitarian law to achieve just and long-lasting peace and stability in the Middle East region, as well as demanding ceasefire, protection of civilians and aid workers, and access to humanitarian aid. This has been achieved through continuous collaboration between Caritas Internationalis (CI), Caritas Jerusalem (CJ), Caritas' sister organizations and additional partners. Efforts included reviewing sensitivities, providing guidance and ensuring alignment with all stakeholders.

In June 2025, Israel and Iran marked a significant intense escalation in hostilities, prompting Caritas MONA to organize an urgent meeting to discuss the escalating conflict in the Middle East and its geopolitical implications. The meeting also included an overview of Caritas's humanitarian response in the region, providing updates on activities in OPT/Gaza, Syria, and Lebanon. The meeting was concluded on emphasizing the importance of continued collaboration between CI, Caritas MONA and regional MOs in advancing advocacy initiatives and position documents, particularly in the context of sensitive crises.

In addition, Caritas MONA collaborated with CI and other partners to support advocacy efforts, contributing to the drafting of a public statement issued in June in response to the Middle East escalation: "Caritas joins Pope Leo XIV's appeal to silence the weapons and restore peace in the Middle East". Following the attack on the Holy Family Catholic Church on July 17, 2025, Caritas MONA released a Statement on its social media channels, primarily Facebook and Instagram, condemning the horrific act and demanding protection of religious sites as well as civilians.

Moreover, Caritas MONA has reposted three statements issued by CI, in support to their advocacy efforts regarding Gaza:

June 26, **"Silence the weapons and restore Peace in the Middle East"**

July 03, **"Starvation or Gunfire – this is not a humanitarian response"**

October 09 **"Statement on Peace: Hope for the holy land"**

Caritas MONA affirms its support to the ceasefire and peace agreement that came into effect on October 10, 2025, in Gaza, and continues to advocate for peace, protection, access of humanitarian aid and upholding international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights. The occupied Palestinian territory cannot be an exception to the law that binds us all.

Additionally, Caritas MONA has signed several Statements in support of Gaza. Please find these statements below:

July: Gaza: **"Starvation or Gunfire – this is not a humanitarian response"**

August: **"Gaza: Israel threatens to ban major aid organizations as starvation deepens"**

September: **"A Death Sentence" – Aid Agencies Warn of Israel's Assault on Gaza city"**

October: **"Humanitarian cautiously welcome ceasefire announcement, demand end to two years of forced displacement of Palestinians in Gaza"**

MEAL Workshop



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Caritas MONA team held a successful workshop on Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL), facilitated by Mrs. Olga Zhyvtsya, Strategy, MEAL and Research Officer at Caritas Internationalis (CI) from 15 to 17 September 2025 in Beirut, Lebanon. Over the course of three days, the team reviewed and updated the Regional MEAL and Strategic framework in alignment with the CI's global strategy.

The team, with the support of Olga, worked on developing realistic indicators for each strategic objective and will propose Means of Verification for an efficient MEAL system. This exercise will feed into the CI's Global data collection system, which the first round of data gathering to be planned by the end of 2025.

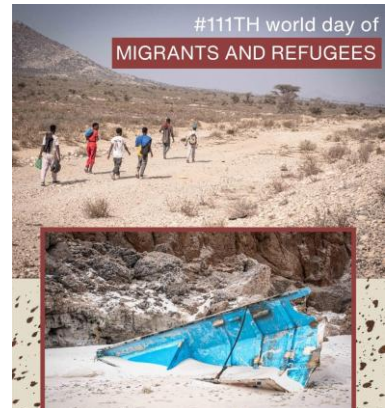
This event is a reflection on the ongoing collaboration between the regional secretariat and CI in the service of the member organizations across the region.

MIGRATION CAMPAIGN

From September 30 to October 3, 2025, Caritas MONA participated in the international conference “Mobilizing Humanity to Rebuild Hope” in Palermo, co-organized by Caritas Internationalis and several partners, marking both the Jubilee of Migrants and the 25th anniversary of the Palermo Protocols.

Representatives from the global Caritas network gathered to strengthen collaboration on migration and anti-trafficking initiatives. The MONA region was represented by Hessen Sayah (Caritas Lebanon), Noha Roukoss and Sara Ben Rached (Caritas MONA). Sara Ben Rached addressed the issues around human trafficking along migration routes in the Horn of Africa, while Hessen Sayah highlighted the situation of migrant domestic workers under the Kafala system.

Caritas MONA also joined the campaign “Missionaries of Hope,” by sharing stories of resilience on its social media channels between October 3 and 17, 2025. On October 5, Caritas MONA representatives attended the Jubilee of Migrants and the Missionary World in Rome, a global moment of prayer and unity celebrating diversity and peace.



Caritas Egypt

On September 25th, the Health Department at Caritas Egypt proudly joined the global celebration of World Heart Day under the inspiring theme “Don’t Miss a Beat!”. The event was filled with interaction, learning, and heartfelt commitments that reflected a true spirit of change and health awareness.

Throughout the day, beneficiaries actively participated in a series of interactive health stations, each designed to empower them to make informed choices for a healthier life. The enthusiasm and engagement witnessed were nothing short of remarkable, a true testament to the power of awareness and community action.

After this day, many committed to regularly tracking their blood pressure and blood sugar, ensuring that monitoring their health becomes a routine rather than an afterthought. The “Know Your Numbers” station played a key role in promoting this vital message.

Participants also expressed a renewed dedication to healthy eating reducing sugar and fats and embracing nutritious meals. There was also a shared commitment to staying active, whether through daily walks, light exercise, or sports. Many attendees made the courageous decision to quit smoking, recognizing it as one of the most meaningful gifts one can offer their heart and loved ones. Participants discovered ways to manage stress and nurture inner peace, reminders that a healthy heart thrives not only on good habits, but also on balance and serenity.

This year’s World Heart Day celebration was a success in every sense. It reinforced that caring for one’s heart begins with small, consistent decisions and Caritas Egypt is proud to accompany every beneficiary on this journey toward a healthier, happier life.



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Caritas Iraq

Caritas Iraq implemented the “In Action for Your Rights” (AID 012970-01-3) program in the southernmost governorate of Basrah, located about 600 km from the capital, Baghdad. The initiative focuses on promoting health, social awareness, and guidance for children and their families. Inspired by Pope John Paul II’s concept of love and funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, the program aims to protect the Christian minority and foster a culture of human rights in Iraq. Its goal is to ensure that the Christian communities in Baghdad and Basrah have access to services and opportunities related to vocational training, employment, and psychological support for young people, women, vulnerable individuals, and persons with special needs, enabling them to fully exercise their rights.

Key activities included:

Case management for children: The programme has supported 350 cases to date, addressing issues such as hyperactivity, discrimination, physical violence, orphanhood, mobility impairments, bullying, trauma, neglect, psychological disorders, emotional abuse, speech difficulties, family separation, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and child labour.

Awareness sessions in classrooms: A total of 333 children participated in educational sessions covering topics such as appropriate and inappropriate touch, building trust, children’s rights, promoting love and peace, anger management, emotional awareness, and anti-bullying strategies.



Caritas Somalia

The *Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Protection in Emergency (AWARE)* project, promoted by Caritas Somalia and implemented by the local organization Volunteers for Agricultural Development (VAD), was launched on August 10, 2025, in the Buloburte district of the Hiran region to respond to the severe water and health crisis affecting the most vulnerable communities.

The intervention aims to ensure safe access to water, improve hygiene conditions, and promote the protection of women and girls. During the first two months, the project provided regular distributions of safe drinking water to 400 families, reducing the risks associated with using unsafe sources. In parallel, 750 women and adolescent girls received personal hygiene kits, essential for maintaining health and dignity.

Forty latrines were constructed, and ten solar-powered lighting systems were installed in communal areas to enhance safety at night. The project also trained 20 hygiene promoters and 20 Water Management Committees, strengthening community capacity to maintain and manage the infrastructure sustainably. Additionally, more than 1,000 women and girls participated in gender-based violence (GBV) awareness sessions, gaining knowledge about risks and reporting mechanisms.

Despite logistical and security challenges, the collaboration between Caritas Somalia, VAD, and local authorities has achieved tangible results. The AWARE project continues to bring water, protection, and hope to the communities of Elmi Sadik and Jabolle, contributing to a safer and more dignified future for all.



Caritas Tunisia

As part of its community-based socio-educational initiatives for families in underprivileged neighborhoods, Caritas Tunisia organized a series of summer activities in La Goulette from July 14 to August 1, 2025.

Sixty-six children aged 7 to 14 took part, guided by 12 young volunteers and supported by 4 dedicated mothers who ensured a safe environment and prepared daily snacks. The program offered a meaningful human and educational experience centered on living together, diversity, inclusion, and environmental respect.

Through 4 creative “planets”: **“Créacolor”**, dedicated to artistic expression; **“Logimix”**, focused on educational games and emotional awareness; **“Polyvoix”**, encouraging storytelling and theater; and **“Technodiversity”**, introducing older participants to digital tools, children explored cooperation, creativity, and self-expression. The daily snack break became a cherished moment of warmth and sharing between families and children.

Guided by the “big brother, big sister” educational approach, the young facilitators fostered a climate of trust and responsibility, acting as caring role models. The final celebration brought together families for a joyful showcase of theater, songs, dances, and a short film on pollution awareness, marking the beginning of a new theater project dedicated to environmental education.

These activities not only nurtured learning but also sparked a sustainable spirit of solidarity, creativity, and community engagement that will continue to grow in the years ahead.



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