



Photo @Caritas Algeria

Editorial

By Mr. Gabriel Hatti, President of Caritas MONA

The issue of our second newsletter for this year 2021 will be practically entirely devoted to initiatives undertaken by Caritas in the MONA Region, within the framework of the Regional Capacity Strengthening Project (CSP).

The goal of this project, launched by Caritas MONA in 2020, is to strengthen Member Organizations' capacities and develop professional expertise of their staff and volunteers in key areas, while promoting ecumenical and interreligious collaboration as well as peace, reconciliation and living together.

At the beginning of 2021, the training that should have taken place in-person was "moved" online, but the active participation and commitment of participants from 10 of the 15 Caritas in the Region exceeded our expectations!

This dynamism continued last summer and is still bearing fruit: each of the Member Organisations has since developed and implemented a "local initiative", that is to say a concrete project in which the participants put into practice, while adapting it to the local context, what was acquired during the training.

Thousands of beneficiaries, of all ages, belonging to a wide diversity of religions, churches, cultures and nationalities, have thus participated in these initiatives, contributing to create in the Region a movement of encounters, dialogue, mutual aid and above all, joy!

On another level, Caritas Internationalis is celebrating its 70th anniversary. This is an opportunity for us to give thanks together for the journey taken and to open ourselves to the future, armed with all the lessons and the fruits of the past.

Interreligious and Ecumenical Collaboration in Action!

The Local Initiatives of the Regional Capacity Strengthening Project (CSP)



Caritas Algeria

In Algeria, as everywhere in the world, the long months of the pandemic were trying on all levels: economic, social, health, but also human and relational. There was therefore a need to come out of isolation and meet each other again, but also to move forward in getting mutually acquainted at the cultural, religious, ethnic and social levels, and to create more fraternal relationships.

For Caritas Algeria, the establishment of a series of initiatives within the framework of the CSP Project, had therefore the main objective of creating these opportunities for meeting and exchanging in order to promote, through cultural and educational activities, the culture of mutual aid without segregation, while respecting each person's particularity and acting united.

For the International Day of Living Together in Peace, celebrated in Algeria on May 16, Caritas organized an entire week of activities, including:

- An exhibition and a photo competition on the theme of living together, organized by the Youth Education project
- A handicrafts exhibition, in collaboration with the Project for Women's Promotion, the Migrants' Center and the Youth Education Project, to promote cultural exchange between a population of different origins

- An activity where the children were able to express their vision of conviviality, in drawings and colors

- A moment of exchange where Algerian and Sub-Saharan women were able to prepare together and present traditional outfits. These outfits were then auctioned, for the benefit of these people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In the beautiful Basilica of Our Lady of Africa, Christians and Muslims gathered for an evening of spirituality.

The program included readings, hymns, poems, in Arabic, French and Tamazight, with the participation of members of the Catholic Church, the Choir of the Holy Trinity Anglican Church of Algiers and the Sufi brotherhood *El Alawiya* represented by the *Djanatu al Arif* Foundation of Algiers.

The second phase of the initiatives, scheduled for summer 2021, was disrupted by the flare-up of pandemic figures.

The summer camps had to be canceled, but the play prepared by the Early Childhood Project was still able to be presented in June to a small audience, to the children's delight!

To conclude, a solidarity action with the families was organized and school supplies were distributed to support the continuation of the children's schooling.

(Photo @Caritas Algeria)

Caritas Egypt

In Egypt, the local initiatives of the CSP project were organized by the Caritas Alexandria Office (C. Alex).

Egypt is one of the largest countries in the region, especially in terms of the size of its population. Although all are considered Egyptians, cultural differences based on religious affiliations and geographical distribution, are one of the causes of a growing daily conflict. Numerous of the problems encountered fall under the same title: the inability to accept differences, i.e. a cultural and religious intolerance, which prevent people from getting along in order to live in peace and in a unity that includes diversity.

Moreover, these conflicts have a negative impact on youngsters: they limit their effective participation in their communities' and their country's development. Youth especially need to be engaged and guided; they have also to be equipped with the appropriate tools that would help them assume their social responsibility.

As an initial step, C. Alex trained 10 youth (members of the organization and refugees) in the themes of the CSP Project, so that they in turn could train other youth.

As a second step, a two-day training course was conducted, in collaboration with partner organizations, with 30 youth: Christians and Muslims, Egyptians and refugees. Then, several initiatives were organized by these youth, between September and November 2021, among which:



- An awareness session for children from the Elixir Al Najah Center for Refugees.
- An open Panel Discussion organized at the Church of the Saints in *Sidi Bishr* near Alexandria.
- A distribution of planting seedlings in front of the Church of Saints Mark and Peter, and the neighboring mosque.
- The recording of a video with young people of different nationalities on the concept of peace, which can be used during youth meetings.
- A mural on the themes of peace and living together done by youth in front of the *Sidi Bishr* mosque.

At the end of November, a closing event brought together all those who had participated in the project, as well as the partners of Caritas in this initiative. The impact and results of the project were presented and certificates awarded to the youth. Posters and brochures were also distributed throughout the project, they carried concise messages on the themes of peace, acceptance of others and living together.

(Photo @ Caritas Egypt)



Caritas Iraq

In Baghdad, Caritas organized an intensive three-day training course in which 17 youth participated. Among the topics covered: peace and violence, conflict management and dialogue, but also practical exercises and moments of discussion.

On the last day, the youth, accompanied by their trainers and executives from Caritas Iraq, visited ancient religious buildings in the capital, such as the Armenian Orthodox Church or the Sheikh Kilani Mosque, where meetings had been scheduled.

At the end of a 2-day training on writing and budgeting a project proposal, participants (divided into 4 groups) were asked to develop and organize in turn a small community initiative, including other youth.

Four programs were thus carried out: a day of meetings and activities with elderly, a moment to raise children's awareness against bullying at school, awareness on environmental protection and the revamp of a garden for families, as well as an outing with refugee children who had suffered from exile.

All these activities contribute in their measure to healing the wounds of the war, the aggressions and the rift that the country has experienced, by entrenching the values of living together that can reconstitute the social fabric and by creating a climate of trust, openness and hope in a common future.

(Photo @Caritas Iraq)

Over the past few months, Caritas Iraq has mobilized very creatively to organize a series of events that addressed not only the numerous components of the Iraqi society but also people of all ages. The initiative, entitled "**We are all brothers**", was implemented in the capital, Baghdad, and in the north of the country, in Qaraqosh and Zakho.

In Qaraqosh, two days of awareness raising among participants to the Project's message of fraternity were followed by eight days of football, with multicultural teams bringing together 60 youth in a festive atmosphere!

Training also brought together children aged 10 to 17 from the Zakho region and the Bersvi camp for displaced Yazidis. The training focused on peaceful coexistence and respectful acquaintance with the traditions of the others. Forty children took part; Christians, Kurds, Muslims and Yazidis. These days were marked by a lot of simplicity and peace. On the last day, the children's testimonies moved the assembly by their sincerity, because they reflected the depth of the experience lived in meeting this other whom they believed to be so different and who turned out to be so close! Many expressed a desire to pass the fruits of this experience on to their families.

Caritas Jordan



Caritas Jordan works for human dignity, the common good and the development of local communities.

On this basis, and within the framework of the Regional CSP project, Caritas designed and implemented during the summer of 2021, a three-day training of trainers (ToT) program, in partnership with the Royal Institute For Inter Faith Studies (RIIFS), to promote the values of diversity, mutual respect and cooperation between people of different religions and cultures, through theoretical content and practical exercises.

Thirty persons, divided into two groups, participated in the training: Jordanians and refugees, men and women, volunteers from Caritas and different local organizations and associations, belonging to different Churches, religions and nationalities among those who are present in Jordan.

Through themes such as constructive dialogue, acceptance of difference, coexistence and citizenship, the training sessions focused on the following three axes:

- Citizenship and human rights
- Diversity, plurality and pluralism
- Dialogue, relationships and communication.

The goal of this project was therefore to strengthen the capacities of trainers as well as mutual respect between different religious and cultural affiliations.

The project also led to the creation of a network of trainers capable of constituting an environment suitable for the establishment of fundamental principles, which could spread within local communities.

This will contribute to reinforce cooperation, create safe spaces for dialogue and consolidate networking with local partners, with the aim of developing the idea of a citizenship which is enriched by diversity and which works for the good of the whole society.

The training ended with a field visit during which both groups met to visit religious and archaeological sites recalling the history of the country in all the richness of its components, over the centuries.

In December 2021, the training will be resumed with the RIIFS for a third group of Caritas employees and volunteers.

(Photo @Caritas Jordan)

Caritas Mauritania

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania is a link between the Arab world and the African world. This dual belonging gives the country a diverse cultural and historical heritage: a multicultural country, inhabited by populations of different colors, ethnicities and cultures, predominantly Muslim. These differences are, however, a source of tension between the communities.

Faced with this situation, Caritas Mauritania implemented the Urban Project of *Dar Naïm*, a district of the suburbs of Nouakchott, to mobilize the population, and particularly youth, against discrimination and in favor of citizenship and living together. A consortium of four youth associations from all communities (Arab, Puular, Soninke and Wolof) was created with the aim of considering ways to defuse inter-community tensions and improve the neighborhood climate.

Therefore, the youth decided to equip themselves with an awareness tool on the importance of national unity and the richness of cultural diversity. This is how the idea of composing together a song, symbol of a united and plural Mauritania, was born. The challenge was ambitious but motivating! They had, in a perfect musical harmony and a civic spirit, to be able to come to an agreement to find the most suitable themes.

A 4-part choir was formed in the 4 national languages, each part dealing with a theme:



The 1st Part, in Arabic, talks about Peace, which is essential for moving forward.

The 2nd Part, in Wolof, talks about the Youth who are the future of the country and who need to be listened to and understood by adults.

The 3rd Part, in Soninke, talks about Women, their role and their commitment that need to be recognized and encouraged.

In the 4th Part, in Pulaar, youth warn those who want to destroy National Unity, a treasure they are committed to guarding and protecting as the apple of their eyes.

As part of the CSP Project, the project of this song has been reactivated and the musical composition perfected, so that it can become a real awareness-raising tool and a vector, during the animation of popular meetings, for the promotion of social cohesion and living together. Youth have been trained in the basics of animation and a program has been set up for the 4 neighborhoods. To date, awareness sessions have already been organized; they will continue in the coming months.

(Photo @Caritas Mauritania)

Caritas 70th Anniversary - Caritas MONA Webinar

On December 12, 2021, *Caritas Internationalis* will celebrate its 70th anniversary!

For this occasion, a series of 7 webinars was organized, one per week. Each Region of the Confederation thus had the opportunity to bear witness to the fruits and discuss the challenges of Caritas' work in the different countries constituting it.

The MONA Region webinar took place on December 2, 2021, under the title: "**Caritas, at the Crossroad of Chaos, witnessing for Justice, Peace and Hope.**"

The experience of the whole region was presented, with an emphasis on four Caritas members: Cyprus, Mauritania, Syria and Lebanon.

You can watch the video of this meeting on YouTube, by clicking [here](#) !

Caritas Syria



Caritas Syria has chosen an expressive title for its initiative: “The Syrian Mosaic”.

Syria is historically distinguished by the presence of a great diversity of religions, ethnicities and churches, a diversity that has been reflected culturally, economically and socially in the country, as a mosaic in which each piece plays an irreplaceable role. Sadly, the war has revealed the easiness and danger of exploiting these differences to create rivalry between communities and a distance that events have only deepened.

Starting from the need to break down the barriers of fear of this other with whom we nevertheless share the same daily concerns, the initiative of Caritas Syria was born, within the framework of the CSP project, to raise awareness among Youth on the acceptance of the other and peacebuilding.

A first objective was to improve the knowledge that youth had of the Syrian society’s components and to enable them to acquire skills and tools to continue the work of peacebuilding in their entourage.

The initiative also aimed at giving these youth the taste for living together, by giving them the opportunity to concretely experience meeting the other.

In Damascus and Aleppo, the initiative brought together 120 youth, girls and boys, aged 17 to 24, i.e. those who have known only war and divisions since their childhood – in fact the war in Syria has been going on for 10 years.

A three-day program has therefore been prepared, as follows:

On the first day, an introductory meeting, during which short videos were shown to present Caritas and its humanitarian work locally and globally, as well as the idea of the initiative, its activities and its objectives.

On the second day, the participants took a tour and a cultural rally in the old town, to discover its diversity and heritage.

On the third day, Caritas organized a reforestation campaign on a site that had been destroyed and disfigured by war, to restore some life and beauty. During the final meeting, the first fruits of these days were able to be reaped, among which the unforeseeable friendship, born as a gift, and the joy of having met, of knowing each other better, and of having been able to act together for the good of society!

A small core group has also been formed to continue working in the line of the initiative and to coordinate any future activity in this area.

(Photo @Caritas Syria)

Upcoming initiatives

Caritas Lebanon and Caritas Tunisia have decided to organize a joint initiative during which youth from both countries will visit each other and participate in social activities and training in the respective countries. Due to the hazards of the pandemic, this project planned for the summer had to be postponed for the first time until December 2021 and a second time until spring 2022.

Caritas Djibouti and Caritas Somalia plan to organize a joint initiative focused on training. In Somalia, the training will target journalists and will emphasize on freedom of expression and press freedom. In Djibouti, teachers will be trained in conflict management, acceptance of diversity and respect for human rights, with an emphasis on children's rights. These same teachers, once trained, will raise awareness among students on these same issues in order to promote the whole human person.

We will share with you their news in the next issue!

Soon, videos on all the CSP Project initiatives will also be published on our social networks.

Pope's Visit to Cyprus and Greece



On December 2, 2021, Pope Francis landed in Cyprus, for a two-day visit after which he visited Greece.

After a first day dedicated to official meetings and encounters with members and movements of the Catholic Church, the second day took place under the sign of ecumenism.

At the end of this day, an ecumenical prayer with the migrants was organized in the presence of the Holy Father, in the parish church of the Holy Cross, still in Nicosia; a ceremony in which Caritas Cyprus actively participated. *(Photo @Vatican News)*



Elizabeth Kassinis, Caritas Cyprus director also shared a testimony on Caritas mission at the service of migrants on the island. *(Photo @Vatican News)*

Currently, around 99% of the persons that Caritas Cyprus serves are migrants. In 2019 around 2,300 beneficiaries were registered, in 2020, 3,822 families were served, of 66 different nationalities. And this number continues to grow due to the major crises in the region.



Safeguarding

In the Region, the last months were intense in terms of Safeguarding as all Member Organizations (MOs) were involved in the self-assessment process of the 5th Caritas Internationalis (CI) Management Standard (among others), before being assessed by an external assessor mandated by CI. Some MOs have even already set their priorities for action and submitted a concrete improvement plan.

A series of trainings as well took place in the Region, in partnership with CRS, with the aim of introducing the Safeguarding theme to our MOs' staff.

As the pandemic is still acute and in order to reach the greatest number of participants, online trainings to the management teams of Caritas Tunisia have also been organized. Three other sessions followed,

this time to raise awareness among all the people working at Caritas Algeria; following these trainings and during the National Caritas Days in Algeria (end of November), a half-day was dedicated to safeguarding, in order to develop a common reflection.

Moreover, in-person training sessions have started at Caritas Syria, with the aim of covering all regions of the country: 5 sessions have already taken place in Damascus and others will follow throughout the country.

The visit of the Regional Safeguarding Focal Point to Caritas Iraq also enabled an interactive training to be conducted with project managers in Baghdad. Various support meetings were likewise held with stakeholders concerned by Safeguarding to discuss points such as safe recruitment, training of volunteers, etc.

Mission in Iran and in Iraq

In September 2021, Karam Abi Yazbeck and Sylvia Eid, respectively Regional Coordinator and Partnership Officer at Caritas MONA, went to Tehran for a four-day mission with Caritas Iran.

The first part of this mission was devoted to the assessment of the Organization on the basis of CI's Management Standards, in the presence of an assessor external to the Organization.

The second fold of the mission, consisted in supporting Caritas Iran in its work of institutional development, identification of risks and work priorities as well as in developing the improvement plan.

From October 18 to 23, 2021, the Regional Coordinator travelled this time to Iraq with the purpose of ensuring a follow-up to the organizational development process,

discussing the implementation of Management Standards and confirming the priorities of action in this area.

Visits were also organized in different regions of the country (Baghdad, Duhok, Mosul, Erbil etc.) where Caritas Iraq implements projects as close as possible to the population.

Meetings with partners were also scheduled.

During this visit, Olga Haddad Issa, Caritas MONA Regional Safeguarding Focal Point, provided training for regional directors and safeguarding focal points.

Additionally, she visited the locations of different projects where safeguarding standards are being applied.

Caritas M.O.N.A.

Middle East and North Africa

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