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COVER NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
date of receipt:	21 January 2025
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Humanitarian assistance in the Middle East - presentation by Caritas Polska

Following the meeting of the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) on 21 January 2025, delegations will find in Annex the presentation made by Caritas Polska¹².

¹ Caritas Polska, identification number in the EU Transparency Register: 034694393502-45.
² This document contains a presentation by an external stakeholder and the views expressed therein are solely those of the third party it originates from. This document cannot be regarded as stating an official position of the Council. It does not reflect the views of the Council or of its members.



Voices from the field

Caritas Poland's experience of working
with Caritas Jerusalem in Gaza and the West Bank

About Caritas and Localisation

Caritas Poland is the biggest social organisation in Poland supporting people in need in Poland and 36 countries.



- Caritas Confederation Members are **present in 164 countries and operating in over 200 territories.**
- Caritas' commitment to local leadership is embedded in its core values of **partnership and subsidiarity.**
- Caritas is decentralised, with **each national organisation operating autonomously within its own country** or region. This enables efficient and timely locally-led action that is informed by the needs, priorities and strengths of the local community.
- As the **social action arm of the local Catholic Church,** Caritas is present in local communities and almost always at the heart of an emergency, well placed to offer the best support possible for the people in need.
- Caritas Member Organisations are signatories of the Charter for Faith-Based Humanitarian Action, endorsed at the World Humanitarian Summit – **confirming our impartiality in provision of humanitarian assistance and protection in alignment with fundamental humanitarian principles.**



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Caritas Poland

supporting people in need in the Middle East for more than 25 years

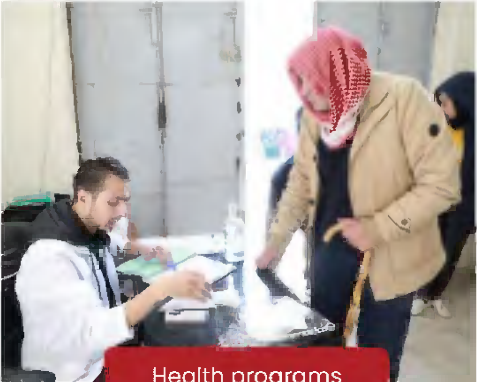
Basic Needs

Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA)

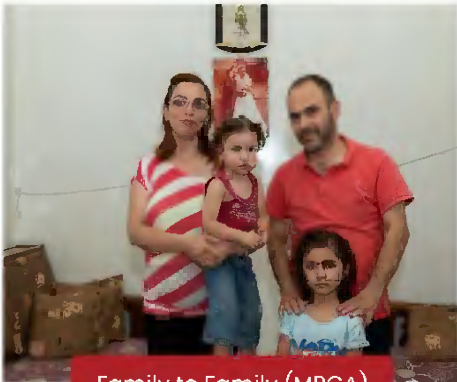
Livelihoods

Health

Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)



Health programs



Family to Family (MPCA)

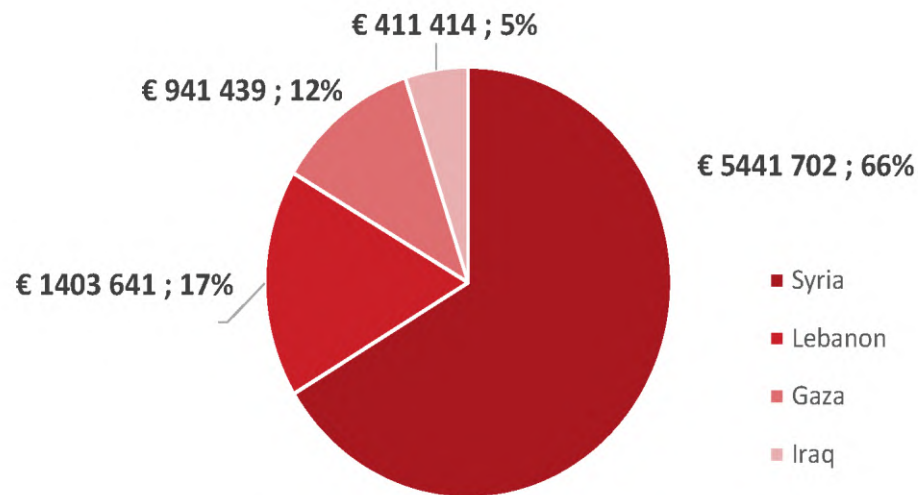


Mental health and PSS

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Family to Family

the biggest cash and livelihood program in Caritas Poland' history



Graph 1: Value of Family to Family Program by country, from 2020 until 2024

- from 2016 until 2024, value of the cash and livelihood support distributed in Syria, Gaza and West Bank, Iraq and Lebanon equals to more than **20 million euro (87.3mln PLN)**
- targeted more than **52 thousand families** in all the target countries
- Livelihood component to transition from cash **support to income generation – 868 families** in Syria – 88% of enterprises still functioning



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Family to Family (MPCA) implementation

- Objectives: targeting the most vulnerable families **to meet their basic needs**
- **High protection risks**, including forced emigration, selling assets, drop out from schools or delaying medical care
- **Selection proces conducted through community structures** – participatory approach and transparency in selection proces
- **Verification proces conducted by partners** following the selection criteria
 - Family size and composition (40% WHH)
 - Income status
 - Food security
 - Health status
 - Education status of children
 - Living conditions and energy sources





Multi-year health and protection programs supporting persons with disabilities

Resilience at every level

- Specialized **rehabilitation services**, inclusion of more specialist therapies and methods every year
- **Social work and PSS** included in the services, outreach services
- **Supporting families and caregivers as well** - MHPSS, social work and referral, awareness on caring about a family member
- **Job placement** for persons with disabilities – campaigns with employers
- **Vocational coaching** for persons with disabilities – supporting employment
- Support in opening **family businesses** for households where persons with disabilities live
- **Social campaigns to promote inclusion** – at community level, local leaders, faith leaders, institutions, media
- Role of church - **awareness raising on inclusion and destigmatization** of physical and intellectual disabilities and other mental health diseases would not be as effective as it is if not the church structures
- **Resilience: individual level – community level – institutional level**

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Multi-year health and protection programs supporting persons with disabilities – Community outreach and PSS



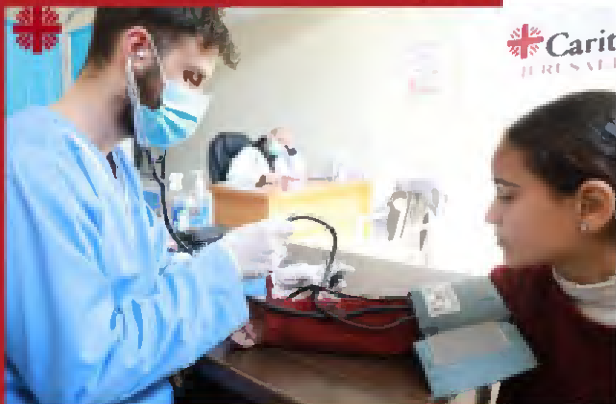
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Localisation - Local leadership in Gaza



- **Local humanitarian organisations in Gaza are continuing to provide assistance** despite immense personal costs, including multiple displacements, loss of family and loved ones, and deprivation of basic necessities including food, shelter, and water
- **Caritas Jerusalem – 97 staff members in Gaza Strip** - and staff of many other local organisations struggle to receive permits to operate or travel across different areas
- Local humanitarian organisations rely on the **infrastructure and support of UNRWA** – their mandate cannot be replaced by other agencies
- Two Caritas staff members have already been killed in Gaza – one was killed with her family while sheltering in a church in October 2023
- Local organisations must be supported to lead in recovery efforts after the ceasefire – local structures were there **before the crisis, during the crisis and will remain after the crisis**
- With **social and spiritual capital Caritas** can lead action for compassion, social justice, protection and inclusion – psychosocial support and healing support

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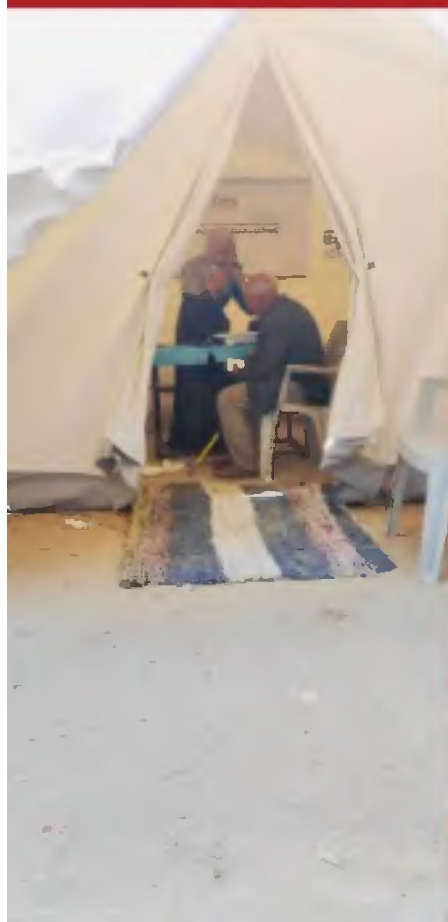


Emergency Response in Gaza

- Many members of Caritas involved in emergency response – through Emergency Appeal (EA) or bilateral programs – total of 4.5mIn EUR in 2024
 - Health: 17 medical teams in 9 health posts
 - Provision of relief items: water, food baskets, hygiene kits, baby milk, clothes and blankets
 - MPCA program, including funding from Caritas Poland
- Note: Christian community is so small – around 640 persons in Gaza only (around 2mIn population)
- **Main challenges:**
 - **Access to affected people and mobility within Gaza**
 - **Staff under so much pressure, vicarious trauma**
 - **Lack of fuel and banking system**
 - **Disrupted local markets**
 - **Lack of medication and medical supplies**

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Health mobile teams in Gaza



Ceasefire is only the beginning...



- Caritas Jerusalem (CJ) **continues to provide emergency support to people in Gaza**: in Southern Gaza (77 staff) and Gaza City (20 staff)
- Scenario of **many IDPs returning to Northern Gaza soon** – needs for protection and enabling safe and dignified return (demilitarization, shelter needs and shelter NFIs, livelihoods)
- **Winterization and access to fuel** and energy sources
- CJ to continue support in Health through **mobile teams and rehabilitation of destroyed fixed health infrastructure**, also in Northern Gaza with return of CJ staff
- **Needs of children are critical** – returning to schools, unaccompanied minors and MHPSS with focus on trauma
- **Re-establishment of local markets and banking** is critical to provide meaningful support – to transition to MPCA
- Close monitoring of the **worsening situation in the West Bank**
- Need of inclusion of physical rehabilitation, pediatrics and nutrition, and specialist care to NCDs in mid-term caritas.pl

The EU as principled humanitarian actor



- The announcement of the ceasefire presents the opportunity for a renewed **commitment by the EU to a more equitable, just, self-determined and peaceful future for the people of Palestine.**
- We urge the EU to use its influence to push first and foremost for the **strict respect of the ceasefire.** The EU and Member States should utilise every diplomatic lever they have to **enable a sustainable ceasefire beyond the first phase.**
- The EU and Member States need to step up **humanitarian diplomacy to address the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza** and wider implications for the humanitarian system.
- We also call on the EU to closely **monitor the situation in the West Bank and Jerusalem to minimize further violence and forced displacement** of Palestinians.

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Thank you!



Nina Mocior
Head of Department of International Cooperation

nmocior@caritas.org.pl

+48 532 475 694

ul. Okopowa 55
01-043 Warszawa
Poland

caritaspolska@caritas.pl

www.caritas.pl