



We welcome  
you



Children's  
Relief  
**Bethlehem**



CARITAS BERNESE HOSPITAL  
مستشفى كاريتاس برنيز

Pater Ernst Schwydrig, 1912-1978  
Founder of Caritas Bernese Hospital in 1952

# Editorial

Dear reader,

What is more beautiful than seeing a sick child healthy and happy again? We at Children's Relief Bethlehem – together with the Caritas Baby Hospital team in Bethlehem – work day in, day out to make that wonderful moment a reality. We are committed to helping all children and families in need – regardless of their origin and religion.

As a non-profit organization based in Lucerne, Switzerland, Children's Relief Bethlehem runs Caritas Baby Hospital in Bethlehem, the only pediatric hospital in the West Bank. It is also the largest private Swiss development project in Palestine.

Up to 50,000 sick children receive comprehensive medical care in Caritas Baby Hospital every year. The local management is making every effort to generate local income to ensure the sustainability of the hospital. However, we rely on donations to cover all running costs, including wages, maintenance and medication supply.

We thank you sincerely for your support.

Sybille Oetliker  
Managing Director

# Caritas Baby Hospital: the sole pediatric hospital in the region

Caritas Baby Hospital of Bethlehem is the only hospital in the West Bank, Palestine, that treats infants and children exclusively. The medical and paramedical teams at the hospital guarantee children up to the age of 18 the best possible care – regardless of their origin and religion.

The hospital is operated by the Swiss organization, Children's Relief Bethlehem. On an operational level, the hospital is managed by an entirely local Executive Committee.

The beginnings of the hospital go back to a young Swiss lady from Lucerne, a Swiss priest from Valais and a Palestinian physician. In 1949, the 24-year-old Hedwig Vetter travelled to the region for the first time. Impressed by the immense hardship of the people, she decided to stay in Bethlehem and organize help for children and mothers. With the support of Dr Antoine Dabdoub, she rented rooms in the old town of Bethlehem, where women with sick children could find medical help. Accordingly, the foundations for the hospital were laid.

A few years later, Fr. Ernst Schnydrig founded the non-profit organization Children's Relief Bethlehem. Its aim was and is still to this day to secure the financing and thus the operation of Caritas Baby Hospital in Bethlehem.

Since the 1950's, Caritas Baby Hospital has been continuously developing. Today, it operates an outpatient department and has allocated 70 beds into two pediatric wards, one neonatal ward as well as an intensive care unit (ICU), for the inpatient treatment of young patients.





# Quick Help for Sick Children in the Outpatient Department

Parents bring their sick children to Caritas Baby Hospital's general outpatient clinics without an appointment to receive medical care. The department is child-friendly, the walls are painted with colorful designs and the furniture is selected to suit the children's needs.

In the newly operated pediatric observation unit, children can stay for up to 24 hours before a decision is made on whether they need to stay at the hospital or if they can be treated back home.

For a number of pediatric diseases, specialist consultations are offered upon appointments. The specialized services are provided in the following areas: such as pulmonology and neurology. There are also various advisory services, such as on a healthy diet and nutrition. In addition, self-help groups are organized to bring families of children with chronic diseases together for educative and social support.



# Life-saving Medicine in the Intensive Care Unit

An intensive care unit has been operating in Caritas Baby Hospital since 2013. Due to the high demand, it was expanded to contain nine beds in 2018. The medical team saves lives here every single day. Intensive care beds are available for babies and newborns as well as for children up to 18 years of age.

Many children with severe respiratory diseases, hereditary metabolic disorders or cardiac conditions are treated here.

Some children in the intensive care unit are so seriously ill that they have almost no chance of survival. In the hospital, everything is done to accompany them on this difficult journey and to alleviate their suffering. A team of social workers is also there for the patient's family to offer psychological support and expert advice in such worrying times.







# Better Quality of Life Thanks to Early-childhood Physiotherapy

The first years of a child's life are crucial for its development. Long-term effects of illnesses can be prevented or alleviated through targeted early physiotherapy. Children with neurological disorders are also in need of care and support at an early stage. Early childhood physiotherapy is in high demand.

Caritas Baby Hospital specializes in physiotherapy for infants up to the age of three. The little patients are often suffering from cerebral palsy or developmental delays. Premature babies are also provided with specialized treatment, such as swallowing therapy, which makes it easier for them to drink.



# Empowering Women in the Mothers' Residency Department

Mothers are able to find needed advice and tranquility in the Mothers' Residency Department of Caritas Baby Hospital. The women stay there while their children are in the hospital. Having the mothers close is good for the healing process of the tiny patients. Mothers will also receive advice on issues such as genetic diseases, hygiene and nutrition.

The women, who are often young, use what they have learned when they return home and pass on the new knowledge to their families and neighbors. That way, they embed the knowledge they have acquired in the community.







# Vital support from the Department for Social Services

Those who cannot pay the modest treatment fees of the Caritas Baby Hospital will find support from the hospital's own social services. The social workers clarify the needs and financial situation of the families. If the family is in a precarious situation, the costs of treatment are covered by the hospital. This ensures that all children receive the same medical care.

As part of the follow-up care of patients, the team of social workers conduct home visits, if necessary or indicated.



# CBH: An Integral Part of the Palestinian Healthcare System

Caritas Baby Hospital was founded as a charitable institution. Since then, the children's hospital has become an important pillar of the Palestinian health system. With its holistic approach, paediatric specialisation and first-class hygiene, the hospital takes on a pioneering role in the Palestinian health system.

CBH is a major employer in the Bethlehem area, with 250 registered staff: the majority reside in the Bethlehem governorate and nearly 70% of staff are women.

The management of operations at Caritas Baby Hospital lies with the CEO, Issa Bandak, and the Medical Director, Dr. Hiyam Marzouqa.



Issa Bandak  
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)  
Caritas Baby Hospital



Hiyam Marzouqa  
Medical Director  
Caritas Baby Hospital

# How you can help

Caritas Baby Hospital can only fulfill its purpose thanks to donations. There are many ways to get involved and help the sick children of the hospital:

- **Private Donations**  
You can request a payment slip or donate online.
- **Your own Fundraising Campaigns**  
Collect donations for the hospital at a private celebration, such as a wedding or birthday.
- **Funeral Donations**  
Consider a donation to the hospital instead of flowers or wreaths.
- **Legacy**  
You can make a request to help ensure long-term medical care in Bethlehem.

As a Zewo-certified Swiss non-profit organization, we strive to keep our administrative expenses as low as possible. If you need any extra information, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you!



# Contact and Donations

You can find more information on the work of Children's Relief Bethlehem, Caritas Baby Hospital and the different ways to support the hospital online. Of course, you can also contact us at any time by phone or email.

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## Imprint

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## A right to Medical Care

Caritas Baby Hospital is an essential pillar of the Palestinian healthcare system. Sick children receive quality medical care, regardless of the religion and social background. Even those who cannot afford the treatment costs are cared for at Caritas Baby Hospital. That principle has been in place since the children's hospital has been founded almost 70 years ago. We are convinced that every child has the right to access good medical care. That is what we stand for.



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