



# Annual Report 2024



Children's  
Relief  
**Bethlehem**



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**Children  
have a right  
to health**

**More information at:  
[www.childrens-  
relief-bethlehem.org](http://www.childrens-relief-bethlehem.org)**

## Change Is the Only Constant

The year 2024 saw significant change at Children's Relief Bethlehem and Caritas Baby Hospital. With the retirement of Sybille Oetliker and Hiyam Marzouqa, we said goodbye to two long-serving leaders who, over the past several decades, were instrumental in shaping our organization.

They initiated, planned, and realized much of what makes the Association what it is today, and we owe them a debt of gratitude for their extraordinary service. Last summer, we bid our farewells and wished them all the best for the future – I would like to take this opportunity to once again sincerely express these good wishes.

At the same time, it is my pleasure to welcome two highly capable leaders to our team: Kathrin Salmon and Ra'fat Allawi. Thanks to their professional competence and strong commitment to our organization, a seamless transition and the continuity of our work is guaranteed. I hope their new roles bring them great satisfaction, and I wish them much success as well as a happy hand in their decisions.

People come and go, but our objective remains the same: guaranteeing children the right to medical care. Last year, the tense situation in the West Bank once again presented major challenges. But although roadblocks often obstructed access to the hospital, medical care remained available at all times thanks to our team's flexibility

and dedication. And so, Caritas Baby Hospital in Bethlehem, sustained by a solid network and the trust of the local population, remained a mainstay in the Palestinian healthcare system, despite the many difficulties.

These efforts would be impossible without the steadfast support of you, our benefactors, and I extend a heartfelt "thank you" for your solidarity. Together we will continue to strive for peace and justice in the Holy Land.



Sibylle Hardegger  
Chair







# The Gift of Hope

**The war in Gaza and the suffering it brought continued to impact the West Bank in 2024. In times like this, signs of hope are all the more important. With the start of construction of the day surgery, we sent a hopeful message. (Kathrin Salmon, Managing Director)**

Children's Relief Bethlehem is pleased to present a positive report on goal attainment in 2024. Thanks to the numerous fundraising activities, a total of CHF 12,182,737 was entered in the books, of which CHF 1,555,273 alone was for the construction of the day

surgery. The total operating income is lower compared to the previous year, mainly due to the exceptionally large bequests we received in 2023.

This support is encouraging, as it shows many people share the aim of continuously expanding pediatric healthcare in Palestine. The new day surgery will fill a critical gap in medical care provision in the region and complement the existing specialized medical services – notably neurology and pulmonology – the hospital is proud to provide. Some 36,000 patients, fewer than in previous years, were treated in 2024; the lower numbers are partly due to the severely restricted mobility of the West Bank population and partly due to the fact that the annual wave of infections such as



respiratory diseases began later than in previous years.

### **Targeted help for sick children**

Although the 24-hour hotline is a valuable service, it is essential that children are examined by a pediatrician at the hospital. Due to the ongoing crisis – restricted road access, lack of income – patient numbers have declined. To mitigate the circumstances and ensure that children have access to the necessary care, a campaign to offer a discount for outpatient treatments and lab work was carried out in the last four months of the year. The campaign met with a positive response in the population and is proof that the children's hospital has close ties to families in the region, enabling it to serve all who need medical care. The worsening economic situation of families was also apparent at the hospital's in-house social services, where more requests for aid were processed.

### **Hope is tangible and motivating**

The past year was marked by the war and its repercussions. Nevertheless, Children's Relief Bethlehem carried on with its plans for building the new hospital unit. The future pediatric day surgery closes a crucial gap in pediatric healthcare in Bethlehem and region, so it was a momentous day when the machinery rolled out and construction began. In November a celebration was held to lay the cornerstone and honor the progress made thus far. The surgical unit is currently Bethlehem's largest construction site; because only local partners are involved in the work,

the project also serves to strengthen the economy in the region. And it gives the local population the gift of hope by offering them a better future.

### **Successful campaign for the new unit**

The Association is contributing its own funds to finance the ambitious project. Both the Head Office in Lucerne and the children's hospital in Bethlehem launched broad communication campaigns and an open call for donations from private individuals and institutions alike. The large response as well as the donations made and pledged are highly gratifying and reinforce our decision to continue with the large project, even in difficult times.

We also can report a positive result concerning our benefactors' commitment to supporting the hospital's ordinary operations and running costs. A total of 15,045 individuals made generous donations to the Association, 5.1 percent more than in the previous year. Securing donations for the hospital's operations and the day surgery will remain a critical part of our work, also in the future.

### **Stability and an optimistic outlook**

The Association Children's Relief Bethlehem can present a positive account of 2024, despite the tense situation in the region. Our organization is financially stable and can rely on broad support thanks to our bold, forward-looking projects, which enable us to continuously expand pediatric healthcare, sustainably and for the long term. Indeed, even in the



face of great adversity, the sole children's hospital in the West Bank assured the provision of pediatric health care also in 2024 for all children and youth under the age of 18 – and this regardless of their religion or social background. And although patient numbers for 2024 are lower than in previous years, we look with hope to the future: with improved access and the new day surgery, more children will be able to benefit from the hospital's high-quality medical care. ●





# Project Day Surgery



## Greater Capacity for Sick Children

The new day surgery building with a total of 2,600 square meters will have the necessary capacity for providing modern and efficient medical care to children who need surgery. The architecture was designed to ensure both a pleasant ambiance and high functionality for patients, families, and medical staff. ●

## More Treatments, More Knowledge

In the first year, roughly 530 children will be treated in the new day surgery. After five years, an estimated 1,224 patients per year will receive surgical care. In addition, the children's hospital in Bethlehem will support some 4,000 parents, informing them about their children's diagnoses and actively involving them in treatment plans. ●




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**“The day surgery is currently the largest construction project in Bethlehem.”**

Fabian Freiseis,  
Chair, Building Commission

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### **A Strong Foundation**

So far, already 2,408 cubic meters of concrete have been used to construct the new day surgery: for the foundation, ceilings, walls, staircases, and other supporting structures in the building. A strong foundation is essential for guaranteeing the building's safety and durability, especially in seismic areas. ●

### **Harmonious Exterior**

Clad in stone from a West Bank quarry near Beit Fajjar, the façade of the new wing forms a harmonious whole with the existing hospital and the city of Bethlehem. As a result, the project also supports the local economy. ●



# A Child's Best Interests at Heart

**Caritas Baby Hospital guaranteed continuous medical care for children in the West Bank, despite the ongoing crisis. CEO Issa Bandak looks back on the past year in which he, with his team, steered the hospital through rough waters.**

Last year was extremely difficult – both for the Palestinian people and for the hospital. But thanks to our dedicated team, the well-being of children remained our top priority. It was once again very apparent how much our staff identify with “their” hospital.

The conditions were anything but easy: military blockades and the ongoing economic crisis in the West Bank had grave consequences on hospital operations. Many families avoided the trip to Bethlehem, either because they feared incidents or because roads to the hospital were closed. As a result, the number of patients treated at the children’s hospital last year dropped.

At the same time, we saw especially high numbers of patients at peak times. By working flexible shifts, however, we were able to secure continuous hospital operations and medical care provision at all times – while also



**Issa Bandak,**  
**CEO Caritas Baby Hospital**

ensuring maximum protection for patients and staff.

## **Difficult conditions for families**

Our staff in social services was in particularly high demand last year. Unemployment in the West Bank rose to 35 percent over the course of the year. As a consequence, many families were no longer able to afford even the already heavily subsidized hospital fees and requested both financial aid and psychosocial care. In total, social services supported 18 percent more children and families than in the previous year.

But it was still not enough: between September and December 2024,

Caritas Baby Hospital expanded financial aid for its services and granted large discounts for outpatient treatments and diagnostic services. The measure enabled us to help even more families.

### Less waiting, greater satisfaction

To further optimize our internal processes, we surveyed our young patients and their families and systematically evaluated their feedback. Based on the results, we revised the appointment system for outpatient care and reduced wait times. Patient satisfaction has risen demonstrably after implementing these changes.

That our work had the greatest possible impact amid the many challenges is mainly due to the dedication of the

entire hospital team and the support of our benefactors. Our guiding principle remains: every child must have access to medical care – especially in times of crisis and conflict. ●





## Facts and Figures



### 283 House Calls

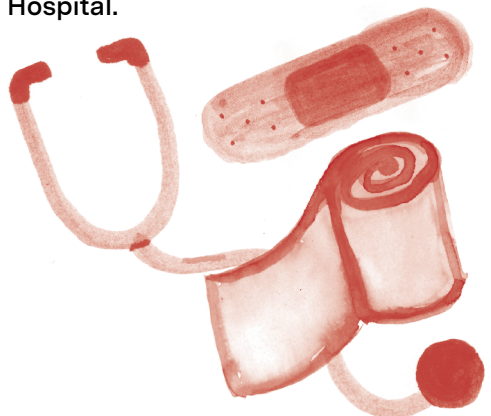
Medical care at home – hospital staff made a total of 283 house calls to support families with follow-up treatments directly in their homes.

## 14,191 Treatments for Respiratory Illnesses

Coughing and shortness of breath – many children came to the children's hospital to receive treatment for infections. Our doctors ensured a speedy return to health.

## 32,703 Outpatient Treatments

A brief check-up, a targeted treatment – children heal quickly from minor ailments thanks to the outpatient medical care offered at Caritas Baby Hospital.





## 117,809 Lab Tests and Analyses

Big effect, low cost – 3% more analyses were performed than in the previous year, sustainably strengthening the hospital's diagnostic capacities.

## 5,298 Ultrasound Examinations

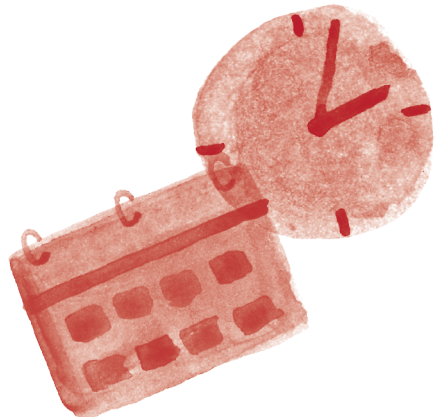
Fast, painless, and precise – numerous ultrasound examinations enabled the early detection of hip dysplasia in newborns.

## 2,273 Physiotherapy Sessions

Strong muscles, fluid movements – regular physiotherapy sessions helped thousands of children mobilize and strengthen their bodies.

## 4.3 Days Average Duration per Stay

Hospital stays remain brief and effective – the trend towards shorter treatments continued in 2024.



# New Medical Director

Last August, Dr. Ra'fat Allawi took over as Medical Director of Caritas Baby Hospital. His 15 years of experience as a pediatric specialist at the hospital have given him firsthand knowledge of both the opportunities and the potential challenges that can arise. He is now setting a new course, with clear goals and innovative projects.

## How has your personal view of Caritas Baby Hospital changed since taking over as Medical Director?

The transition from specialized pediatrician to overseeing the entire hospital was certainly a consequential step that greatly broadened my perspective. As a physician, my main interest was ensuring every child received the best-possible medical care. Now my focus is also on strategic decisions to ensure the long-term success of the hospital and well-being of our patients. I increasingly view Caritas Baby Hospital through an “institutional lens” and see it in its significance for the country: namely, as a mainstay of Palestinian healthcare. This means I ask more questions about how the hospital can strengthen the local healthcare sector and how we can serve beyond the hospital's boundaries. I am excited about these fascinating challenges.

**Traveling to Caritas Baby Hospital is currently difficult for many families.**



Dr. Ra'fat Allawi, Chief Medical Officer

## How can the hospital support them?

Our social services staff is already making many house calls to ensure that sick children are getting the care they need after a hospital stay. This is a key part of our strategy and our services. In light of the current situation, however, we have to think about how we can better support Palestinians in the southern West Bank. That's why we're making a strong effort to improve the medical care offered on site. We're currently assessing feasibility and identifying the most urgent needs as well as the main health-related priorities. We'll then use the results to develop an intervention program that specifically addresses these needs while also respecting the capacities and limits of Caritas Baby Hospital.

**You're also investing in stronger partnerships for the children's hospital, both locally and internationally. What specific projects and collaborations are most important?**

Collaborations are the key to continually improving the quality of our services. Locally, we work closely with the Palestinian Ministry of Health and other hospitals in the interest of making efficient use of resources and strengthening healthcare provision in the region. Internationally, our focus is on partnerships with universities and research centers, mainly in the areas of continuing education and professional development for our team. We're particularly interested in working with other organizations as we prepare to integrate the new day surgery into the rest of the hospital. These partnerships

aid us in defining the right standards and ensuring that our patients receive the best-possible medical care. ●



# Helping Young People in Need

**In 2024, Children's Relief Bethlehem financed projects for children with roughly CHF 150,000. The funds were used to enable music lessons, pay school fees for families in need, and renovate a kindergarten.**

In addition to operating Caritas Baby Hospital, the Association Children's Relief Bethlehem also funds individual projects in the region, as financial resources permit and in line with the statutes. Children, women, and families are always at the heart of these projects, because good health in children depends not only on access to medical care but also on good living conditions.

One project aims to integrate children with special needs and their families while also improving their quality of life. The focus is on minimizing negative social and psychological impacts in addition to facilitating access to essential services. The project team works closely with affected families and local organizations to create a broad range of services.

Psychosocial counseling for people with disabilities as well as continuing education courses for their caregivers are offered with the aim of raising awareness and promoting well-being. Organized leisure activities promoted the inclusion and integration of people with disabilities in the community.

Simple building modifications as well as medical aids and services were supplied to promote mobility and meet medical needs.

In addition, Children's Relief Bethlehem helped finance a school for children with learning difficulties by paying school fees, in particular for children from families in precarious economic circumstances.

The Board of the Association Children's Relief Bethlehem was able to help finance a total of five local organizations. ●





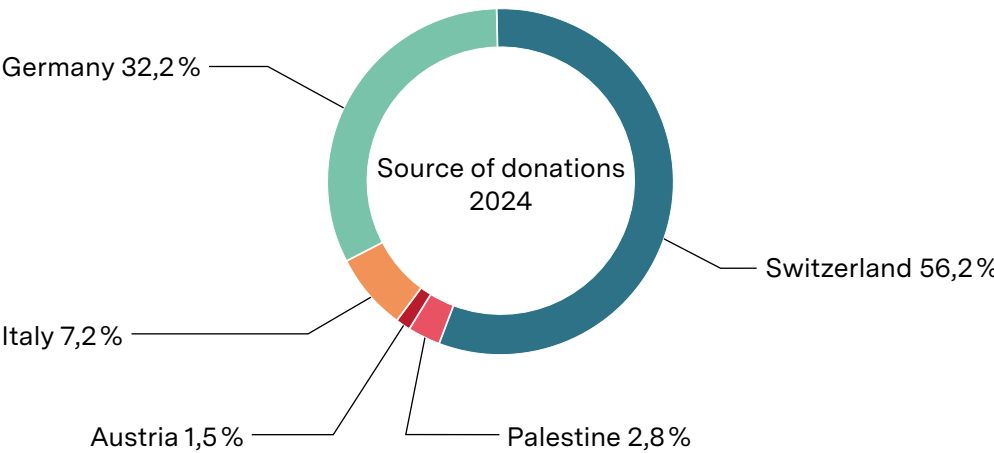
# Introduction

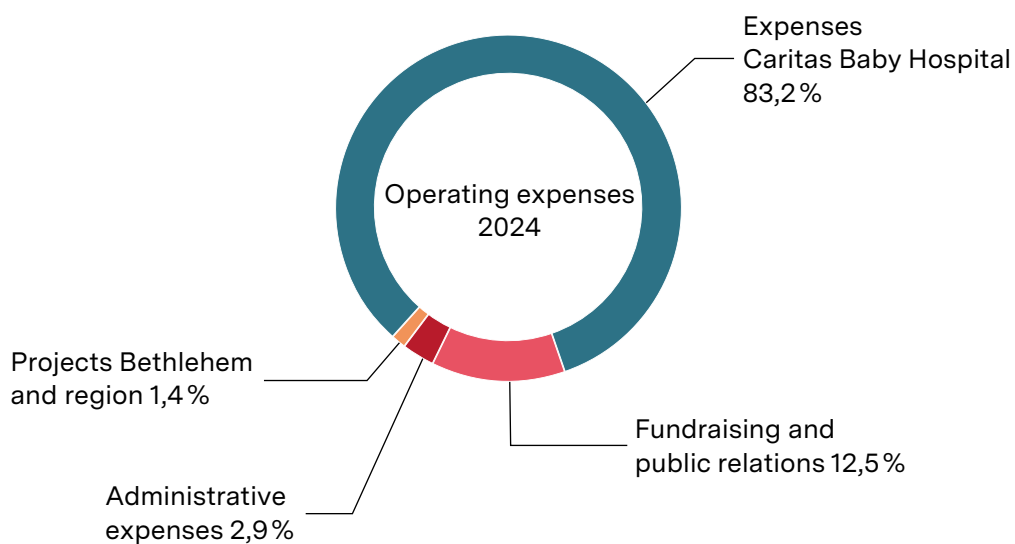
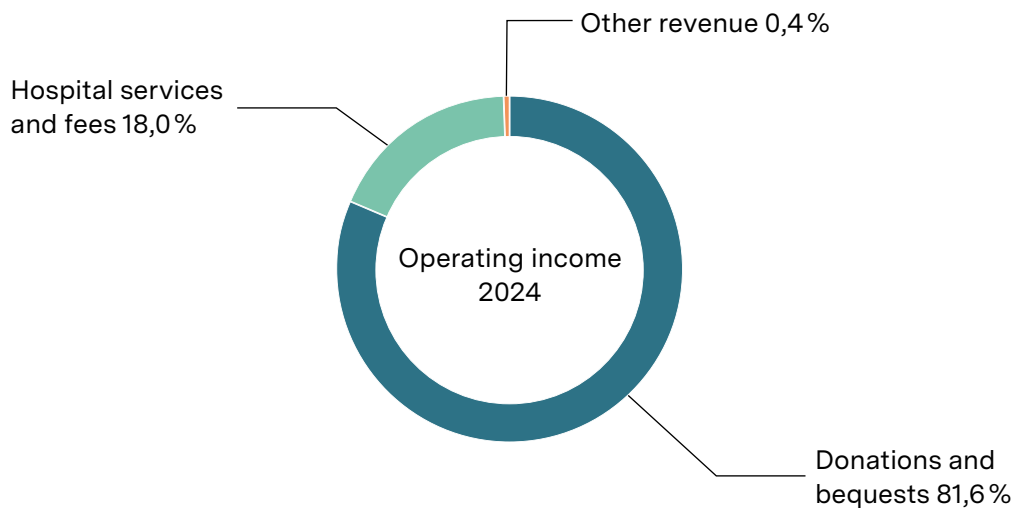
The 2024 annual financial statement was audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers Ltd. The final operating statement presents a surplus of CHF 2,344,513. After allocation to the fund for restricted donations, the total profit was CHF 2,508,204, thanks to the good financial result.

Total income from donations and bequests amounted to CHF 12,182,737, of which CHF 1,555,273 are earmarked for the day surgery. The tense situation in the region led to a decline in hospital treatments; consequently, locally generated income fell to CHF 2,682,303. This result highlights the significance of donations from abroad.

Most donations stem from Switzerland (CHF 6,845,730) followed by Germany (CHF 3,923,009). Donations from Italy doubled to CHF 880,916, while donors in Palestine and Austria contributed CHF 346,060 and CHF 187,023 respectively.

Project expenses remained overall stable. Expenditures for the hospital and day surgery increased to CHF 10,460,202. The amount for regional projects decreased during the same period to CHF 178,452. Costs for fundraising and administration fell to CHF 1,573,562 and to CHF 364,261 respectively.





# Balance Sheet

Balance sheet as at December 31 in CHF	2024	2023
<b>Assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	16'625'867	16'088'013
Securities	17'524'888	14'254'858
Receivables	6'385'626	5'205'358
Accrued income and prepaid expenses	128'642	135'283
Reserves and non-current assets	2	2
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>40'665'026</b>	<b>35'683'514</b>
<b>Liabilities and equity</b>		
Liabilities	390'288	226'403
Accrued liabilities	251'704	86'228
Long-term provisions	5'412'000	5'160'000
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>6'053'992</b>	<b>5'472'631</b>
Fund capital Caritas Baby Hospital	5'321'133	4'700'465
Fund capital day surgery	2'743'338	1'472'060
<b>Total fund capital</b>	<b>8'064'471</b>	<b>6'172'525</b>
<b>Organization capital</b>	<b>26'546'562</b>	<b>24'038'358</b>
<b>Total liabilities and equity</b>	<b>40'665'026</b>	<b>35'683'514</b>

\*Gross revenue from donations included CHF 24,000 from the City of Geneva, as well as EUR 4,092,757 in legacy donations and collections from Kinderhilfe Bethlehem im Deutschen Caritasverband e.V. A total of EUR 3,500,000 were transferred to Children’s Relief Bethlehem in Lucerne from Germany. This amount includes EUR 80,000 contributed by Sternstunden e.V. ●

# Operating Statement

Operating statement in CHF	2024	2023
<b>Operating income and expenses</b>		
Donations and bequests Caritas Baby Hospital	10'200'417	10'006'546
Donations and bequests day surgery	1'555'273	1'472'060
Donations and bequests (unrestricted use)	427'048	2'642'312
<b>Total donations and bequests*</b>	<b>12'182'737</b>	<b>14'120'917</b>
Hospital services and fees	2'682'303	2'826'593
Other revenue	55'949	50'572
<b>Total hospital services</b>	<b>2'738'252</b>	<b>2'877'165</b>
<b>Operating income</b>	<b>14'920'989</b>	<b>16'998'082</b>
Expenses Caritas Baby Hospital	10'460'202	10'033'416
Projects Bethlehem and region	178'452	477'535
<b>Total project expenses</b>	<b>10'638'654</b>	<b>10'510'951</b>
<b>Total fundraising</b>	<b>1'573'562</b>	<b>1'595'936</b>
<b>Total administration</b>	<b>364'261</b>	<b>374'215</b>
<b>Operating expenses</b>	<b>12'576'477</b>	<b>12'481'102</b>
<b>Operating result</b>	<b>2'344'513</b>	<b>4'516'980</b>
<b>Financial result and other results</b>		
Financial result	1'793'279	675'990
Extraordinary result	262'359	16'155
<b>Annual result prior to fund movements</b>	<b>4'400'151</b>	<b>5'209'125</b>
Change in restricted funds	-1'891'946	-3'099'754
<b>Annual result prior to capital movements</b>	<b>2'508'204</b>	<b>2'109'371</b>



# Committees

Children's Relief Bethlehem is based in Lucerne. Since its establishment in 1963, the Association has operated and financed Caritas Baby Hospital in Bethlehem. The Association supports also local projects for children, adolescents, and mothers, and it provides emergency aid in crises. The General Assembly is the governing body of the Association. Offices in Germany, Italy,

and Austria actively support the Association through fundraising and public outreach.

The eight members of the Board of directors (see below) represent the association externally and are responsible for its strategic leadership. The founding organizations (Caritas Germany, Caritas Switzerland) and the patrons (Archbishop of Freiburg and Bishop of Basel) each send a representative to the Board ●



Sibylle Hardegger,  
President<sup>1</sup>



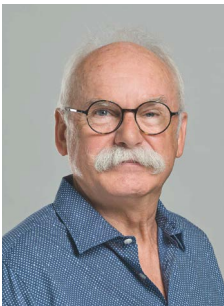
Fabian Freiseis,  
Vice President<sup>2</sup>



Michael Angehrn



Jutta Biermayer



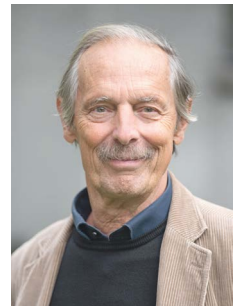
Hugo Fasel<sup>3</sup>



Stephanie  
Hackethal



Christoph  
Klitsch-Ott<sup>4</sup>



Carlo Mordasini

1) Diocese of Basel; 2) Archdiocese of Freiburg; 3) Caritas Switzerland;  
4) Caritas Germany

# Head Office

The Head Office is the operative body of the Association. It reports to the Board and the Steering Committee. Led by Kathrin Salmon, the nine employees in the Head Office acquire donations, communicate information about Caritas Baby Hospital in Switzerland, carry out administrative tasks, and ensure that funding in its entirety benefits the hospital in Bethlehem. The

Head Office staff also monitors work at the children's hospital and coordinates collaborations with the country offices in Europe. ●



Front row, from left to right: Nihal Söyler (Finance), Andrea Imgrüth (Administration), Kathrin Salmon (Managing Director), Helen Keller (Head of Finance), Eveline Aregger (Administration); Back row, from left to right: Stefanie Schürmann (Fundraising), Kerstin Bieler (Fundraising), Richard Asbeck (Head of Communications/Fundraising), Elisabeth Janssen (Administration).

# Contact

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Als Zeichen für Vertrauen trägt  
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das Spenden-Siegel des Deutschen  
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At long last

## Together for a Better Future

Thanks to your support, sick children in Bethlehem have a chance for better health. Your donations help young patients receive the best medical care possible. For this, we offer our heartfelt thanks to you, our benefactors from Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Austria, and beyond.



Children's  
Relief  
**Bethlehem**

Individuals, church parishes and communities, foundations and institutions – your generosity is at the heart of this indispensable support for Caritas Baby Hospital.

We thank you, too, for continuing to stand by our work to improve the health and lives of children in Palestine in the long term. Your support makes a real difference. ●

