



Annual Report 2025



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)

Building a Better Future

Last year, the war in Gaza once again cast its shadow over our activities at Children’s Relief Bethlehem and the children’s hospital. To be sure, the West Bank, including Bethlehem, remained largely spared from the armed conflict itself, but the side effects were palpable, and that every day.

The lack of tourism means the local population has no functioning economy and no source of income. In the worst cases, there is a great risk of falling into poverty. Meanwhile, roadblocks and repeated closures or long waits at the check points as well as the increase in settler violence continue to severely restrict residents’ freedom of movement.

Nevertheless, key initiatives enabled the children’s hospital to support the population: as a rule, Children’s Relief Bethlehem covered the cost of treating sick children, except for the copayment, and our social services staff traveled to see patients whenever an on-site visit was necessary.

We all breathed a sigh of relief when a ceasefire was negotiated for Gaza at the start of October. Although the suspension of hostilities remains fragile, there is growing hope for a permanent end to the war and for peace in the Middle East.

Despite the massive destruction seen in the past two years of war, and despite drastic funding cuts to aid

programs worldwide, Children’s Relief Bethlehem has found the courage to grow. The large “day surgery” project launched in our anniversary year of 2023 has made excellent progress. Scheduled to open in early summer 2026, the new unit will fill a significant gap in the hospital’s healthcare services.

During the blessing ceremony for the structure in October 2025, I was honored to witness how the project symbolizes a beacon of hope for the hospital’s employees and for the Palestinian people. Yes, we want to build a better future in Bethlehem – because every child has a right to healthcare. I sincerely thank all of you who support us in this work.



Sibylle Hardegger
Chair





Maintaining Hope

Despite the difficult circumstances, the Bethlehem children's hospital accomplished a great deal in 2025: more patients were treated, key services expanded, and our construction project made headway. This was possible thanks to the commitment on site and the unwavering support of our partners. (Kathrin Salmon, Managing Director)

Although the general conditions were challenging, the Bethlehem children's hospital looks back on an overall successful year. After patient numbers plummeted in the aftermath of

October 7, 2023, a clear upward trend was discernible in 2025, with more than 40,000 treatments conducted (13 percent higher than in the previous year). Demand was particularly high during the winter months due to numerous cases of respiratory illness. More neurological and gastrointestinal complaints were also treated.

These numbers are more than just empty statistics. They speak of children who received medical care, of parents who found support in difficult situations, and of dedicated hospital employees who, day in and day out, do great work in a demanding setting. For many families, the Bethlehem children's hospital is the only reliable source of specialized pediatric medicine in Palestine.



The Association Children's Relief Bethlehem can also present a positive financial balance for 2025. Our many fundraising activities were once again impactful, strengthening our work in the long term. With income at CHF 7,084,134 we attained a better result than in the previous year. This outcome would have been impossible without the trust and ongoing support of private individuals and institutions as well as the generous bequests we received. These donations are the bedrock upon which our activities on behalf of children and families in Bethlehem are built and expanded.

Day surgery – together for the future

A core priority in 2025 was the day surgery project, which made excellent progress thanks to the generosity of many benefactors. The basic structure was completed in late summer, after which a new construction phase began, with a focus on the building's interior. Meanwhile, the first medical devices and other equipment were also ordered.

The building commission played a decisive role throughout the entire process. The commission consists of representatives from the Board, the Head Office in Lucerne, and Caritas Baby Hospital in Bethlehem, all of whom worked closely together across international borders. Regular coordination meetings, technical discussions, and detailed cost monitoring were integral parts of the project. When the bids submitted in spring clearly exceeded the original budget for the second construction phase, the committee

reacted quickly and responsibly: priorities were reviewed and a new call for tenders was issued. Although these measures caused a delay, they safeguarded the project's quality and curbed the financial risk.

It was also during this intense phase that, following careful consideration and extensive consultations, the Board took the decision to adjust the project budget and the financial forecast. Key reasons for this step include higher costs for Palestinian construction companies due to increased operational expenses as well as the greater economic risk in general. The global financial and political situation also created more uncertainty for the project's subsequent stages.

Another significant development was the establishment of a partnership with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for the further expansion of the hospital.

In October 2025, the ceremony to bless the basic structure of the day surgery was an emotional moment for the Association and the Caritas Baby Hospital. Bishop Felix Gmür, one of the two Protectors, traveled to Bethlehem with the Steering Committee to assess the situation on the ground. He observed: "This visit is a sign of our solidarity with the local population and especially with the children of Palestine, who have endured unthinkable suffering during the past two years." The structure was blessed in the presence of the hospital staff.



Focus on mental health

The ongoing tensions and the increase in settler activities in the West Bank have severely impacted on the lives of children, adolescents, and their families. The children's psychological health was particularly affected, and the precarious situation and repeated exposure to violence caused the mental health of many young people to deteriorate – a development that highlights the urgent need for targeted support measures and long-term treatment programs.

Unfortunately, however, mental health services were temporarily halted in mid-2025, when the psychologist was unable to provide treatments after relocating. The acute lack of specialists in the West Bank represents a major

challenge – and is all the more reason for the team to intensify their efforts to ensure this important service can be resumed in 2026.

Together for a better future

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all our benefactors. It is your solidarity that gives children in Palestine access to medical care, a chance to heal, and new hope. Together, we are working to make the right to health-care a reality for all children. ●



Project Day Surgery



Quality at the building site

Even on a tight schedule, construction of the day surgery is carried out with due diligence. All processes are clearly defined, and tasks are continually monitored and coordinated on site. This discipline and attention to detail ensure that every building phase meets the requirements of a surgical unit. For the sake of the children. ●

Load-bearing structure

The basic structure was completed in late summer 2025. Massive concrete walls form the foundation for the future: on more than 2,600 square meters, surgical and multi-purpose rooms for outpatient procedures will be built. The architecture melds seamlessly into the existing hospital and is designed with efficiency in mind. ●



“The project is now entering its final stage.”

Fabian Freiseis,
Chair, Building Commission

Safety a top priority

Protective gear and safety regulations are standard features at the building site throughout the year. The site managers regularly check for compliance with the safety requirements, which were set in place to ensure that all work is supervised and conducted responsibly, even in challenging and demanding circumstances. ●

Perseverance in a crisis

Restricted delivery routes and precarious general conditions present regular challenges to the construction workers. However, the building is progressing well thanks to their determination and excellent team spirit. Each completed task represents a step toward the shared goal of offering new hope to children and their families. ●

A Clear Strategy Bears Fruit

Over the past five years, Caritas Baby Hospital has made comprehensive improvements to its medical care services, organizational structures, and quality standards. Now, the only specialized children’s hospital in Palestine is ready to enter the next phase. CEO Issa Bandak reflects on past achievements and looks to the future.

When we began setting out our new strategy five years ago, we pursued a clear course: our aim was to substantially improve medical care for children while also strengthening the hospital’s structures in order to secure the long-term delivery of these vital services.

Under the motto “Caritas Baby Hospital – Reinventing the Future”, we implemented 16 initiatives between 2021 and 2025 that addressed five clearly defined goals. A newly created administrative office for strategy and performance measurement ensured that we could systematically and effectively structure the change process.

Goal-focused approach

Children and their experiences at the hospital – from initial contact to discharge – were at the center of our strategy. We analyzed waiting times,



Issa Bandak,
CEO Caritas Baby Hospital

routinely collected feedback from parents, and made numerous organizational adjustments to significantly improve our processes. By the end of this strategic phase, we attained satisfaction rates of 88.5 percent for inpatient and 95.5 percent for outpatient care.

At the same time, we also expanded selected services provided at the hospital. A major priority was the day surgery project – an endeavor that placed heavy demands on the management team. We also developed systems for better reaching children who live in more remote areas surrounding Hebron; this issue will remain a primary concern in the future.

We also enhanced several key internal management tools. Now, data-based planning processes containing clearly defined quality and performance indicators support our managers and teams in making well-informed, transparent decisions. These developments represent a valuable basis for continuously improving the medical care we provide.

Further training and long-term staff retention were other major priorities. Related measures involved creating new training and professional development courses, strengthening specialist and leadership skills at all levels, and revising our performance and development system. We also expanded our psychological counseling service with the aim of better supporting our staff in their demanding day-to-day work.

As the only specialized pediatric hospital in Palestine, we also take on responsibility beyond our institution. Examples include our collaboration with medical schools, programs for training young professionals, health-promotion initiatives at schools, and awareness-raising campaigns in the area of mother-child health. Through these activities, we play a major part in upgrading the local healthcare system.

Expanding hospital services

In the upcoming strategic period, we plan to steadily build on the progress made. The established structures for quality assessment, HR development, and performance management provide a solid basis for the next steps. The hospital's five strategic goals will

continue to serve as our guiding principles, even when individual initiatives must be adapted to accommodate changing circumstances.

Indeed, new challenges are arising due to the political and economic developments in the region. The need for specialized pediatric medical care remains high, yet many families face ever-greater obstacles in accessing these services. We are all the more determined to provide high-quality treatment to children in remote or particularly disadvantaged regions. ●

Facts and Figures



High-quality medical care

With a total of 40,430 treatments, Caritas Baby Hospital recorded a 13% increase in demand compared to the previous year. Respiratory diseases were the most common ailment, with 15,534 cases treated.

High demand for specialized medical care

Overall, 9,238 specialized consultations were held, an increase of 18% over the previous year. With 143,307 lab tests, 22% more samples and analyses promoted accurate diagnoses.





Youngest children treated most often

Infants under one year made up 41% of all children treated. Their mothers often stayed with them. The Mothers' Residency Department registered 10,673 overnight stays.

Social responsibility remains a key objective

Our social services supported 3,107 needy families by assuming a part of the treatment costs and offering 4,060 counseling sessions.

Regional roots

The hospital continues to be the region's main point of contact for pediatric medical care, with 76% of all sick children/patients coming from Bethlehem. The proportion of children from Hebron was just 18%, less than the long-term average due to the difficult conditions.



Quality and the Future in Mind

Looking back on the past year, it is the exceptional commitment of the hospital staff that stands out most. In a stressful environment marked by uncertainty, our doctors, nurses, and all other professionals took responsibility for their young patients' wellbeing, and that on a daily basis – earning the trust of the children's families in the process. To me, this shared effort is one of the hallmarks of 2025, both in medical and human terms.

Comprehensive preparations for the new day surgery unit were a major clinical priority. Working closely with all hospital departments, we developed a detailed surgical catalog: each procedure was systematically assessed – from possible complications to specific requirements for surgeons and standardized procedures in the operating room. At the same time, we took a close look at the necessary medical technology and ensured that all technical solutions interacted correctly.

In addition to general out-patient pediatric surgery, the range of day surgery services will also include orthopedic, urological, and ENT care. We are very pleased about these developments. In addition, we carried out targeted updates in our lab, including the introduction of a local blood bank and improved coagulation analyses.



Dr. Ra'fat Allawi, Chief Medical Officer

Investing in the medicine of tomorrow

The official recognition of Caritas Baby Hospital as a teaching hospital for full pediatric specialist training in Palestine was of strategic importance. The accreditation by the Palestinian Medical Council confirms the high standards upheld by our pediatric services, which cover intensive care and specialized medical services.

It also enabled several hundred students from various universities to complete their clinical training at our hospital over the course of the year. Through this collaboration with medical schools, we are making a conscious investment in the long-term development of pediatric medicine in Palestine.

Better quality, more services

In order to consistently improve quality and patient safety, several management decisions were made last year. Currently, a total of 16 doctors are broadening their professional expertise on our wards, thus also expanding the range of services offered at the children's hospital. This speeds up decision-making processes and strengthens interdisciplinary collaboration, all in the interest of providing better treatments to our young patients.

At the same time, core guidelines on infection prevention were reviewed and standardized in partnership with the staff responsible for quality assurance and patient safety. These structural measures help ensure that everyday clinical practices function well.

Overall, the targeted, impactful investments in people, structures, and processes have been very worthwhile. They lay the foundation for us to continue fulfilling our medical duty at a high professional and ethical level. ●



Support beyond the hospital

In 2025, Children’s Relief Bethlehem contributed a total of CHF 181,964 to selected programs that support children and parents in the areas of early childhood development and inclusion. In addition to these projects, funds were allocated for urgent humanitarian aid in Gaza.

Children’s Relief Bethlehem supported the “My Dream Center for Children” project run by medico international schweiz. Located in Yatta, in the Hebron Governorate, the center provides specialized therapeutic and educational services for children with autism, Down syndrome, and learning difficulties. The aim is strengthening the children’s psychological and social competencies while also promoting their long-term integration into school and society. Individually designed programs as well as customized therapies improve the children’s developmental and educational prospects. In addition, counseling and support are offered to families to include them in the processes and create a supportive and stable environment.

Children’s Relief Bethlehem also continued to support the Al-Tufula Center in Nazareth. Affiliated with the Nazareth Nurseries Institute, the center’s purpose is the long-term strengthening of early childhood development. Its

workshops for parents, caregivers, and educational professionals foster the resilience of Palestinian children aged three to eight while also improving the quality of early childhood care. Children’s Relief Bethlehem contributed to the project’s costs.

In addition to these programs, the Board also allocated CHF 120,000 from the Project Fund to finance the expansion of the day surgery unit at the Bethlehem children’s hospital.

To help mitigate the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the Association also funded emergency aid measures. Our collaboration with the Pontifical Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) and the Near East Council of Churches (NECC) supplied 500 families with flour and fresh vegetables. The German Caritas Association also provided 817 households with aid in the form of cash assistance, food, hygiene items, household items, and psychosocial services. Both measures were co-financed by Children’s Relief Bethlehem.

These projects illustrate the Association’s comprehensive approach of complementing long-term development programs with urgently needed humanitarian aid. ●



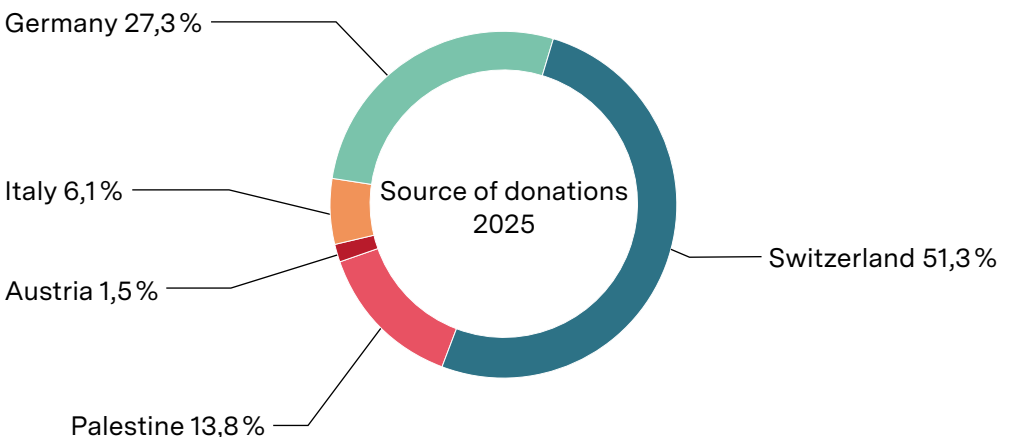
Introduction

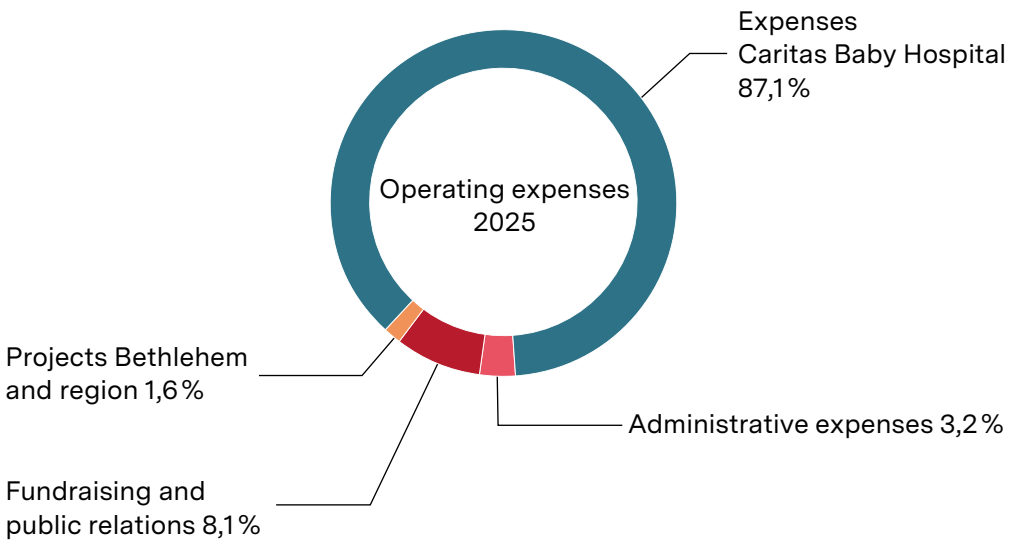
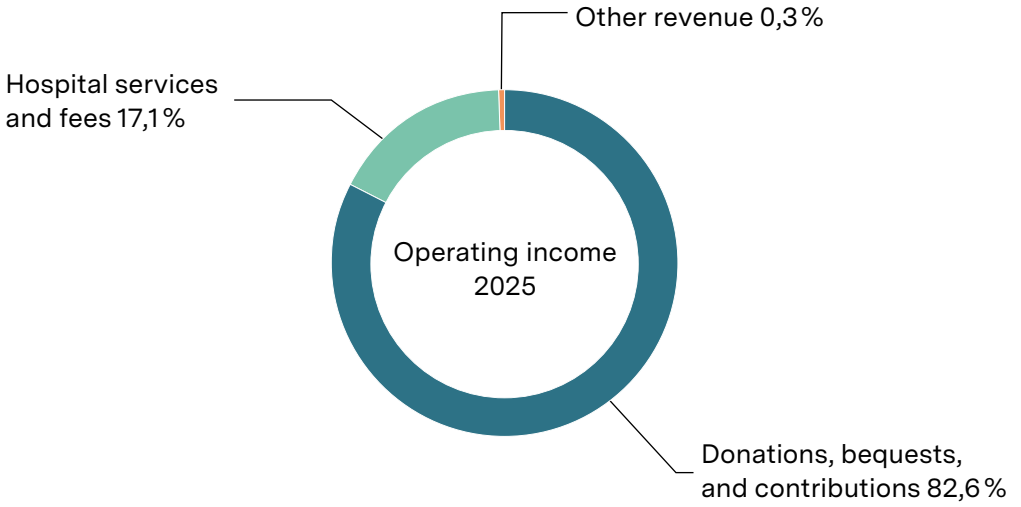
The 2025 annual financial statement was audited for the first time by Forvis Mazars auditing firm. The operating statement closed with an operating result of CHF 3,304,193. After accounting for allocations to the fund for restricted donations, the annual result was CHF 2,361,637.

The result was significantly impacted by period-related effects associated with the expansion of the day surgery. Some donations earmarked for this project will first be spent in later periods. The positive balance between operating income (CHF 16,704,981) and operating expenses (CHF 13,400,788) reflects these spending postponements.

Donations from Switzerland came to CHF 7,084,134, constituting the highest amount, followed by contributions from Germany (CHF 3,765,777), Palestine (CHF 1,899,426), Italy (CHF 844,200), and Austria (CHF 203,430). Contributions from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) are included in the income from Palestine.

Operating expenses at Caritas Baby Hospital increased to CHF 11,669,324 due to project-related costs, whereas fundraising and administration expenses decreased to a total of CHF 1,521,021.





Balance Sheet

Balance sheet as at December 31 in CHF	2025	2024
Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	19'686'159	16'625'867
Securities	18'225'659	17'524'888
Receivables	6'639'984	6'385'626
Accrued income and prepaid expenses	827'820	128'642
Reserves and non-current assets	2	2
Total assets	45'379'624	40'665'026
Liabilities and equity		
Liabilities	853'290	390'288
Accrued liabilities	1'287'368	251'704
Long-term provisions	5'634'000	5'412'000
Total liabilities	7'774'657	6'053'992
Fund capital Caritas Baby Hospital	4'692'069	5'321'133
Fund capital day surgery	4'004'698	2'743'338
Total fund capital	8'696'767	8'064'471
Organization capital	28'908'200	26'546'562
Total liabilities and equity	45'379'624	40'665'026

* This amount includes EUR 4,514,205 in gross revenue from donations from “Kinderhilfe Bethlehem im Deutschen Caritasverband e.V.”, an amount that includes EUR 80,000 from bequests, collections, and the contribution from “Sternstunden e.V.”. Of the gross revenue from donations, a total of EUR 4,220,000 was transferred to Children’s Relief Bethlehem Lucerne.

The total amount also includes contributions from the organization “Katholisch Stadt Zürich” (CHF 20,000) as well as government funds of CHF 1,273,806.

The annual financial statement and the auditor’s report are published on the Association’s website: www.childrens-relief-bethlehem.org ●

Operating Statement

Operating statement in CHF	2025	2024
Operating income and expenses		
Caritas Baby Hospital	9'678'242	10'200'417
Day surgery	2'537'526	1'555'273
Unrestricted funds	1'581'199	427'048
Total donations, bequests, and contributions*	13'796'967	12'182'737
Hospital services and fees	2'855'785	2'682'303
Other revenue	52'229	55'949
Total hospital services	2'908'014	2'738'252
Operating income	16'704'981	14'920'989
Caritas Baby Hospital	11'669'324	10'460'202
Projects Bethlehem and region	210'443	178'452
Total project expenses	11'879'767	10'638'654
Total fundraising	1'086'075	1'573'562
Total administration	434'946	364'261
Operating expenses	13'400'788	12'576'477
Operating result	3'304'193	2'344'513
Financial result and other results		
Financial result	-310'260	1'793'279
Extraordinary result	-	262'359
Annual result prior to fund movements	2'993'933	4'400'151
Change in restricted funds	-632'296	-1'891'946
Annual result prior to capital movements	2'361'637	2'508'204

Board

The eight Board members represent the Association externally and are responsible for strategic leadership. The Board is made up of the Chair and Vice Chair as well as a representative from each of the two founding organizations (Caritas Switzerland and the German Caritas Association) and other elected members. ●



Sibylle Hardegger,
Chair and
Delegate of the
Diocese of Basel,
Theologian



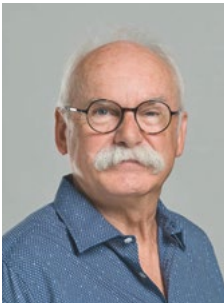
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Michael Angehrn,
Lawyer



Jutta Biermayer
Pediatric Nurse



Hugo Fasel,
Representative
of Caritas
Switzerland,
Economist



Stephanie
Hackethal,
Hospital Director
and Physician



Christoph
Klitsch-Ott,
Delegate of the
German Caritas
Association,
Theologian



Carlo Mordasini,
Specialist for
Pulmonary
Diseases

Head Office

The Head Office, operative body of the Association since 1963, reports to the Board. Led by Kathrin Salmon, the Head Office staff raises funds, informs the public about Caritas Baby Hospital, and ensures that all donations are allocated according to their intended purpose. The Head Office also monitors work at the children's hospital and coordinates collaborations with the country offices in Europe.

Once a year, the staff organizes the General Assembly, the highest body of the Association Children's Relief Bethlehem. The Assembly approves the annual report and annual financial statement, and grants discharge to the Board. ●



Front row, from left to right: Nihal Söyler (Finance), Andrea Imgrüth (Administration), Kerstin Bieler (Fundraising), Kathrin Salmon (Managing Director), Helen Keller (Head of Finance), Eveline Aregger (Administration).

Back row, from left to right: Stefanie Schürmann (Fundraising), Elisabeth Janssen (Administration), Petra Bolfing (Fundraising, ad interim), Richard Asbeck (Head of Communications/Fundraising).

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At long last

Together we make a difference

Your generosity gives children in Bethlehem access to quality medical care, day in and day out. And your support is instrumental in ensuring that the hospital's staff can work in a professional environment.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to you, our benefactors in Switzerland, Germany, Italy, and Austria. Every donation – whether from individuals, parishes, church communities, foundations, or institutions – counts and helps foster a setting in which families receive support and children can flourish.

Thank you for walking this path with us and for continuing to help strengthen healthcare for children in Palestine. ●



Children's
Relief
Bethlehem

