



Due to support from USAID, Beit Jala is better equipped to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Photo by CRS staff

“We are saving many lives every day”

PROJECT BETTER EQUIPS BEIT JALA HOSPITAL TO COPE WITH COVID-19

Since COVID-19 was detected at a local level in March 2020, Beit Jala Hospital's capacity to cope with the caseload has expanded immensely. As Infection Prevention and Control lead Ibrahim Alsaouri noted, “Before the project, our ability [to respond to COVID-19] was limited.”

Thanks to generous funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Catholic Relief Services is providing comprehensive support to Beit Jala and 13 other hospitals across the West Bank, equipping them for the immense challenges they now face due to the pandemic.

Due to the intervention and support provided through this project, the staff at Beit Jala has been properly equipped and trained to face the challenges.

“We are so thankful for the great support of this project,” Alsaouri said. The support was possible thanks to generous funding from USAID.

“*This training [in infection prevention and control measures] helped us a lot because those people who received the training came back to the hospital and trained other staff ... cleaners, ambulance drivers, cooks, nurses and doctors.*”

— ABDEL NASSER QISI
BEIT JALA QUALITY CONTROL OFFICER



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CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

At the outset of the pandemic, the Ministry of Health began providing personal protective equipment (PPE) and support, but as the case numbers increased and the situation worsened, the hospital and its staff were soon overwhelmed. The hospital was unable to appropriately treat or separate COVID-positive and COVID-negative patients, resulting in a deteriorating situation and high case numbers among staff.

Beit Jala Quality Control Officer Abdel Nasser Qisi said, “CRS was able to provide us with all the support we needed at the right time because we had shortages of PPE and many supplies. [The project] came at the right moment to help and support, otherwise a disaster would have happened.”

Nasser Qisi said that critical support was provided to train staff on infection prevention and control (IPC) measures, which helped to present the solution as a hospital-wide team effort. “This training helped us a lot because those people who received the training came back to the hospital and trained other staff. Cleaners, ambulance drivers, cooks, nurses and doctors were all trained in IPC. This really helped us to decrease the spread of COVID-19 inside the hospital.”

Through assessments of the hospital and the staff training, the triage area and intensive care unit (ICU) were seen as major areas where interventions were necessary. USAID’s support enabled Beit Jala to open a new triage area and expand the ICU with appropriate equipment.

“Instead of transferring COVID-19 patients to other centers, now we can treat them in our hospital,” said Alsaouri. “Before, we were forced to arrange with other hospitals and centers in Hebron and Ramallah, and usually we would get a negative answer. Now we have 18 extra beds for COVID-19 patients.

“The occupancy rate in the ICU is 100%, said Alsaouri. “It’s always full. We are saving many lives every day. The project supplied us with ICU beds, trolleys, electrocardiographs, and oxygen generators. This really enabled us to receive more patients.”

The project continues to aid Beit Jala. Just this month, additional PPE was provided to ensure that in the continued battle with COVID-19, Beit Jala can be seen as a reliable source of strength for the community.

Alsaouri said that when the Ministry of Health visited Beit Jala in December, they were pleased to see the project’s investments and noted the benefits experienced by the hospital.

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— IBRAHIM ALSAOURI
INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL LEAD