

# CaritasNews

CHANGE STARTS WITH YOU

#170 | SUMMER 2023



## SUMMER 2023 EDITION

### **FOOD CRISIS IN ZIMBABWE:**

How food shortages are affecting the region.

### **FIRST AUSTRALIANS:**

Meeting with our partners in Cairns.

### **A CHRISTMAS STORY:**

Mrs Lan's story of resilience and hope.

### **WHAT WE ACHIEVED TOGETHER IN 2022:**

How your generous support helped us reach the most vulnerable.



**Caritas**  
AUSTRALIA

End poverty  
Promote justice  
Uphold dignity

# THANK YOU

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you into the new year and thank you for the incredible support you showed towards Caritas Australia and the communities that we serve throughout 2022. Your kindness and generosity are the backbone of everything we do, and they help us reach the most vulnerable and marginalised, so that they may have a brighter and better tomorrow.

As we enter this new year and look forward to all the blessings and wonder it will bring, we look back to 2022 and think of everything we have learned and endured as a community and as a human family.

Last year was filled with emergencies and conflict some of us never imagined we would witness in our lifetime. There was the war in Ukraine, which continues to affect millions; the crippling food crisis in Africa and the ongoing issues brought on by climate change.

Despite all the challenges and turmoil that these crises have brought to the communities we serve, they have acted as an urgent call and an invitation for all of us to take action and join hands as sisters and brothers. It has allowed Caritas Australia to listen even more closely to the needs of vulnerable people and the advice of our partners, and to actively assist wherever the need is greatest. As a result, we have helped develop new programs, which will take us to new locations including Ethiopia, Tuvalu and Samoa.

It is through the power of your kindness that we have been able to meet our goal of expanding and reaching out to even more communities across the world, and for this I cannot thank you enough.

In this summer edition of Caritas News, you will read about Caritas Australia's meeting with our First Australian partners held in Cairns last year. You will also have the opportunity to learn about our new programs, and how the Africa Food Crisis has affected the people of Zimbabwe. And finally, you will hear from our partners in Vietnam and their work supporting people living with disabilities.

We really do hope that you enjoy this edition of Caritas News and that we can continue to work together in 2023 to create a better future for all.



With gratitude,

*Kirsty Robertson*

**Kirsty Robertson**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Caritas Australia

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### Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and of the land on which we live and work. We acknowledge the Elders, past and present, and younger generations as the emerging leaders of the future. This land is and will always belong to our First Australians people.

**Writer/Editor:** Connie Zehender

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**Cover:** Fihlani with her children on their homestead in north-western Zimbabwe.

**Photo:** Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

**All photos belong to Caritas Australia unless otherwise stated.**

ZIMBABWE

# A NATION AFFECTED BY FOOD CRISIS

Food is a fundamental human right, yet it is estimated that a staggering 690 million people go hungry every day. Not having enough to eat has ripple effects on health, the ability to get an education and earn a living, as well as the ability for communities to flourish.

Since 2018, the people of Zimbabwe have been experiencing severe droughts, with rainfall and harvests becoming increasingly low. Changes in climate, population growth, rising food prices, natural disasters and the ongoing effects of COVID-19 have also been contributing factors to the African nation's current state of food insecurity, and have compromised the livelihoods of many vulnerable communities.

The estimated number of people experiencing food scarcity in Zimbabwe grew from 5.16 million to 5.4 million between the months of March and June last year, while those resorting to food-related crisis activities increased from 7.6 million people to 8 million during the same period.

Approximately 40 percent of households reported having to reduce their food intake, forcing them to skip meals and destock livestock. Additionally, approximately 90 percent of households reported having two meals per day, instead of the three



Children on their homestead in north-western Zimbabwe. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia

recommended by the Ministry of Health and Child Care.

With your generosity and support, Caritas Australia is working with our partner Caritas Hwange to help vulnerable communities in Zimbabwe adapt to the current drought so that families have enough food to survive.

**"Thanks to our supporters, we are able to reach out to those in dire need, and provide them with goods such as maize, legumes and vegetable oil, and ensure that they remain nourished and safe during this crisis,"** said Sr Ivy Khoury, Africa Programs Coordinator at Caritas Australia.



### A word from Super Dube, Program Coordinator at Caritas Hwange

The impact of the food crisis has been very severe on the people of Zimbabwe, particularly those in Hwange district. Besides the food crisis, the people of Hwange have faced other challenges, including the shortage of water, problem animals and COVID-19.

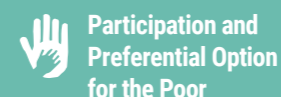
As coping strategies, the community had to reduce the number of meals per day, resulting in malnutrition. Cases of malnutrition amongst the children increased and school drop-outs rose. The community also resorted to disposing of their assets, mainly livestock – selling them at low prices, which depleted the household's assets base. Women, children, the elderly and people living with disability were more affected by the crisis, and we have

also seen an insurgence of several other issues, such as gender-based violence and child marriage.

To mitigate the effects of this crisis, Caritas Hwange, implemented the food aid program, which targeted the most vulnerable groups so that they receive pulses, cereals and vegetable oil. Following the implementation of the program, there were many improvements on the lives of the affected communities. The beneficiaries were able to have the recommended three meals per day and children were also able to attend school on a daily basis. According to the Village Health Workers, cases of malnutrition also reduced significantly.

CATHOLIC  
SOCIAL  
TEACHING

Look out for the CST icons throughout this edition.



# NEW PROGRAMS IN 2023



**For over 55 years, Caritas Australia has been committed to working with vulnerable communities across Asia, Africa, the Pacific and here in Australia to uphold the dignity of marginalised people and help them forge a path out of poverty.**

**With your generous support, we can reach out to those who need it most and work alongside our local partners on the ground to address social issues and improve disaster risk reduction, education, food security, protection and reduce gender-based violence.**

**This year, we are excited to be exploring new parts of the world, working alongside new partners with exciting programs to continue to fulfil our mission of creating a better, and more just world for all.**

### **Ethiopia: Innovative Climate-Smart Livelihood Enhancement for Resilience Building Project**

In 2023, Caritas Australia will be working closely with our new partners Caritas Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Catholic Church Social and Development Commission (ECC-SDCO) to assist drought-prone and conflict-ridden regions in the country. We will also be addressing areas where there has been prolonged famine and youth unemployment. This program's main focus will be on improving the livelihoods and agriculture of zones affected by famine, drought and conflict, specifically targeting women and young people.

### **Tuvalu: Enhancing Climate Change Resilience on Vaitupu**

Climate change in the Pacific region has been an ongoing issue for many years. The island of Vaitupu is small and vulnerable to natural disasters. Given the small geographic size and isolation of the island, climate change resilience is critical for survival. This year, Caritas Australia will be working with Te Gao Island Community Organisation, on a new initiative designed to address the region's urgent needs around Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).

### **Samoa: Ecosystem Restoration to Harness Community Sustainability in Falease'elā**

This program aims to work in ecosystem restoration, environmental protection, and in developing sustainable forms of village livelihood for many years. Much like many countries in the Pacific, Samoa's vulnerability makes this program a high priority, which will result in more resilient communities when natural disasters strike.



FIRST AUSTRALIANS

# WORKING TOGETHER TO CREATE CHANGE

Caritas Australia staff with First Australian Partners.  
Photo: Tim Lam/Caritas Australia.

At the end of last year, Caritas Australia had the privilege of meeting face-to-face with our First Australian partners, including Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation, Djilpin Arts and Aboriginal Carbon Foundation. This meeting was an opportunity for us to listen, learn and hear from our First Australian partners about what reconciliation means to them. We also discussed the most important priorities for our First Australian partners and how we can accompany them in their journey to creating meaningful and lasting change.

The theme of the event was Accompaniment, which means walking side-by-side with our program partners, supporting them and following their lead. By accompanying our partners and working together, we can create meaningful change and amplify the voices of First Nations people.

The partners meeting also provided a chance to discuss and seek feedback on Caritas Australia's recently developed Reconciliation Action Plan and First Australians Program Strategy.

### **Djilpin Arts snapshot**

Your support is helping First Nations people in remote Northern Territory communities access employment opportunities – and share their culture.

Caritas Australia's First Australians partner Djilpin Arts was first established in 2002. The centre is designed to help Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory gain new culturally appropriate skills that provide financial stability and preserve Indigenous traditions, as well as supporting them with employment, training, income, cultural healing, and intergenerational connection.

Djilpin Arts advocates for remote communities while also protecting and sharing indigenous traditions. It supports cultural enterprises, all while supporting artists in the community with an income. Thanks to your generosity, Djilpin Arts can continue to work with Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, so that they may thrive and successfully preserve their ancient customs.

### **Throughout 2022, Djilpin Arts:**

Worked with over 80 people to help them gain employment opportunities and develop intergenerational healing.

Ran workshops and shared their knowledge with the younger generation and with visitors.

Developed their new three-year program plan to better serve and meet the needs of local communities.

Strengthened engagement with traditional owners.



Mrs Lan with her children Quan and Loan.  
Photo: Phan Tam Lan/Caritas Australia.

CHRISTMAS STORIES

# FROM CHRISTMAS PAST

**Christmas is a time of family and friends, and for hope and peace. Your generous support during Christmas helped change the lives of countless families across the world. Here are the stories of some of the people whose lives have been transformed through your compassion.**

## A Christmas story of resilience and hope

Vietnam has made significant economic and social progress in recent decades. Yet in spite of this, poverty and inequality remain prominent in the country, particularly in rural areas where people with disabilities are more likely to experience discrimination and stigmatisation.

Unfortunately, disability and poverty seem to go hand-in-hand for people living in vulnerable parts of the world. Currently, there are more than half a million children in Vietnam living with a disability. Even though the right to an education is mandated by Vietnamese law, thousands of school-aged children in Vietnam stay at home or sit uninvolved in classrooms because of their disability. Additionally, the lack of specialised school facilities and disability-inclusion training for teachers mean that many children with a disability cannot have enriching or meaningful experiences at school.

Thanks to your generosity, Caritas Australia is able to work with partners to implement programs designed to drive disability inclusion by building awareness among communities and providing essential life skills training to people living with disability.

Thirty-nine-year-old Lan\* is a mother of three children,

living in the Quang Tri province in Vietnam. Her eight-year-old son, Quan\*, and 12-year-old daughter, Loan\*, both live with a vision impairment. Lan often had to take her children to Hanoi for eye treatment. But it was costly for her family to travel, as she and her husband relied on manual work and farming to make a living. Their income was not stable, life was tough, and Lan feared for the future of her children.

As a loving and devoted mother, Lan was determined to do everything in her power to help create a brighter future for her children. Thus, she joined the Empowerment of People with Disabilities project, run by Caritas Australia's partner, the Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD).

With your support and the help of our partner, Quan and Loan were able to join community-based classrooms so that they could interact with other children living with disabilities. Lan has volunteered to help run the classes and is now a leader of a parents' group in her area. Her children are more confident and are looking forward to completing their schooling.

*This program is also supported by the Australian Government, through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). \*Names have been changed to protect their identity.*



Maria in her village in Tanzania. Photo: August Lucky/Caritas Australia.

## Maria's story

Do you remember Maria from Tanzania? She was featured in last year's Christmas appeal.

Maria lives in a village in Tanzania experiencing long-term food and water insecurity, and she struggled to feed her young family on a daily basis.

With your generous help, Maria joined the A+ program where she learned sustainable farming techniques, entrepreneurship, literacy and numeracy, gender awareness, environmental protection, water, hygiene and sanitation. Your support also helped upgrade the drinking water systems in Maria's village so that they no longer had to walk long distances to access safe, clean water. This helped boost food production, and Maria and her husband are now producing enough crops to feed their family and to sell, which has increased their income.

*This program is also supported by the Australian Government, through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). \*Names have been changed to protect their identity.*



Phuong colouring with crayons. Photo: Caritas Australia.

## Phuong's story

Many of you will remember the story of Phuong\* from Vietnam from 2020's Christmas Appeal. Phuong was born with hydrocephalus, a medical condition that causes seizures, and makes speaking and walking difficult. Without a sustainable income, Phuong's parents were not equipped to manage the growing needs of a child born into poverty with a severe disability. He needed specialist therapy and hospital treatments that his parents could not afford, a situation many families in poor, rural areas of Vietnam face.

Thanks to your generosity and support, Phuong and his family received adequate support from Caritas Australia's Empowering People with Disabilities program, which is implemented through our partner organisation, Sustainable Rural Development (SRD). He can now access a rehabilitation therapist and community-based classes, and his parents have joined a support group for parents of children living with disabilities.

*This program is also supported by the Australian Government, through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). \*Names have been changed to protect their identity.*

# WHAT WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE TOGETHER

Last year was an incredibly difficult one, with significant disruptions in communities around the world. In recent times, we have seen an unprecedented number of crises unfold one after the other. Yet, despite all of this, we have witnessed the extraordinary courage and resilience of the people we serve as they face challenges, disarray, and turmoil.

None of the stories of hope and strength that we have compiled for this edition of Caritas News would have been possible without the unconditional support and dedication to helping those in need that you showed us throughout 2022.

Your kindness has helped vulnerable communities being confronted with emergencies such as conflict, food insecurity and natural disasters. Thanks to you, we have been able to provide assistance where it has

been needed the most, working with our partners to provide essential services such as shelter, water, food and medication.

Between 2021 and 2022, you helped reach **378,435** people experiencing humanitarian emergencies through Caritas Australia funding, and **999,031** people through joint appeals with Caritas Internationalis. Additionally, we were able to respond to **34** emergencies in **23** countries, including:

- Afghanistan
- Ukraine
- Ethiopia
- Philippines
- Pakistan
- Tonga.

Your support also allowed us to work alongside our partners, and focus on our long-term development work, reaching out to a total of **301,819 direct program participants** and **933,965 indirect participants**. We worked with vulnerable communities across Africa, Asia, the Pacific and Australia and continued our mission of helping them forge a path out of poverty.



Oliva teaches adults from her community in Tanzania. Photo: August Lucky.



Tarsini with her Saving and Loans Group near her home in Pandeglang District. Photo: Laz Harfa.



Tului and her family with their installed water tank. Photo: Caritas Samoa.



Janice and her daughters weaving pandanus leaves near Djilpin Arts. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

## Africa

With your help, we worked across the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. You supported:

- **16** programs.
- **97,937** people, including **53,054** women, **1,682** people with disabilities, and **35,298** children and youth.
- **292,059** people indirectly.

## Asia

Your generosity allowed us to reach out to communities in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Timor-Leste and Vietnam. You supported:

- **30** programs.
- **169,435** people, including **93,588** women, **4,240** people with disabilities and **49,641** children and youth.
- **338,541** people indirectly.

## The Pacific

Thanks to you, we have worked hand-in-hand with people in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Samoa. You supported:

- **15** programs.
- **34,447** people, including **15,498** women, **268** people with disabilities and **30,191** children and youth.
- **303,365** people indirectly.

## Australia

Because of your generosity, we were able to work alongside our First Australian partners across 10 projects.

Your support helped our partner Red Dust Healing to provide train-the-trainer workshops for **67** people; who in turn reached hundreds of others by delivering the program in communities.

You also supported Djilpin Arts Aboriginal Corporation, who provides employment and training for **89** local community members.

# OUR COMMUNITY

## Blessing of new Sydney Office

On 22 November last year, Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane led Caritas Australia staff and volunteers in a Blessing of the organisation's new Sydney office in Mascot.

The event included a Welcome to Country by Auntie Maxine Ryan, before Archbishop Coleridge led the organisation in prayer, then blessing the office space.

On the same day, Archbishop Coleridge was also formally appointed as a Director on Caritas Australia's Board.

**"I am delighted to be welcomed onto the Caritas Australia Board,"** said Archbishop Coleridge.

**"Project Compassion has always been close to my heart, and I've always appreciated the way that Caritas Australia helps to unite our Church community through our shared faith, and to strengthen our connection with dioceses, parishes and schools across the country."**



Blessing of Sydney office by Archbishop Mark Coleridge. Photo: Jared Weedon/Caritas Australia.

## Women for the World luncheon

In November 2022, Caritas Australia had the honour of hosting a Women for the World event in Sydney, raising an impressive \$106,000 in just one day.

Women for the World brings Australians together to support and raise funds for the most vulnerable women and girls in the world. It is a campaign that crosses borders, connects communities and creates lasting change.

Attendees had the opportunity to hear from Caritas Australia Chief Executive Officer Kirsty Robertson, Impact Director Leigh Mathews and Acting Papua New Guinea Country Director Roslyn Kuniata about some of the people involved with our programs and their inspiring stories.

A highlight of the event was an interactive "competition" between three potential programs designed to help change lives for a better future for women and girls, in Papua New Guinea, Nepal and Zimbabwe. Guests were able to cast votes on their favourite program by ballot during the event. The Centre of Hope program, which provides protection services for woman at risk of gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea, was the winner.



Women for the World event. Photo: Caritas Australia.



Caritas Australia staff at Sydney office on Thank You Day. Photo: Andrea Andres/Caritas Australia.

**"It was especially poignant for our Programs staff. Our Programs staff have a keen sense of how far a dollar can stretch in the communities we work with and were able to tell our supporters that it doesn't matter if they donate \$5 or \$5000 – it all makes a difference."**

Staff in Caritas Australia's offices across the country, including Perth, Melbourne, Brisbane and Darwin all participated in various Thank You Day activities.

## Thank You Day

Caritas Australia held its first ever Thank You Day last November to celebrate the first week of the season of Advent.

Staff from across the organisation came together to thank over 2,800 supporters with personal phone calls, emails and handwritten cards (Did you receive one? If not, don't worry we will be calling again later this year!).

Caritas Australia staff thanked supporters who have been donating for 20 or 30 years, as well as new supporters who made their first ever donation to the organisation in 2022.

**"It was wonderful to hear the positive feedback from supporters. One supporter told me 'You've really made my day with this phone call',"** said Abby Jones, Caritas Australia's Supporter Services Manager.



Caritas Australia acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians, past, present and emerging, of the land on which all our offices are located. This edition may include images or words of indigenous people who may be deceased.



Caritas Australia is fully accredited by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Please note: some of the programs featured in this issue of Caritas News are funded by Caritas Australia and the Australian Government.



Caritas Australia is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID).







The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) is the national regulator of charities.



Caritas Australia is a proud member of CAN, a group of eleven Church-based overseas aid and development agencies committed to empowering people and providing avenues for them to overcome injustice and poverty.

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