

CaritasNews

CHANGE STARTS WITH YOU

#171 | AUTUMN 2023



AUTUMN 2023 EDITION

PROJECT COMPASSION UPDATE:

Hear from Thandolwayo and Anatercia, who were featured in previous Project Compassions.

FOR ALL FUTURE GENERATIONS:

See how your support is creating lasting change for children in Nepal.

EMPOWERING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN VIETNAM:

Read the inspiring story of Thu, who is forging a path out of poverty for his family.

COMPASSION IN ACTION:

Schools and parishes across Australia host events for Project Compassion.



Caritas
AUSTRALIA

End poverty
Promote justice
Uphold dignity

THANK YOU

One of my childhood memories was carrying my Project Compassion box during primary school. I wanted to change the world and, in the process, I discovered the power of giving and the impact that my contribution could have in the lives of others.

The theme of Project Compassion, For All Future Generations, speaks to the ripple effect of kindness and compassion. Our actions today can create ripples of hope that leads to lasting change for generations to come.

Every year, I am inspired by the many supporters, schools and parishes who put their compassion in action to raise funds for vulnerable communities across the world. For me, it is an opportunity to have "my tank filled" by the passion and spirit of supporters like you, whose hearts and minds enable us to walk alongside vulnerable communities across the world so that they may forge a brighter future.

In this edition of *Caritas News*, you will see a snapshot of some of the amazing fundraising events that took place across Australia for Project Compassion. You will also meet some of the people featured in this year's Project Compassion, such as Laxmi, a resilient 16-year-old girl from Nepal who overcame numerous challenges to become a leader to other girls in her community. I am also inspired by the story of Thu, who lost his leg to a landmine from the Vietnam War. With the support of people like you, he was able to open a barber shop to earn income to support his family.

You will also read an update on two familiar faces – Anatercia from Mozambique (who was featured in last year's Project Compassion) and Thandolwayo (from Project Compassion 2019).

The past few months have been challenging for vulnerable communities across the world and our thoughts are particularly with the people of Türkiye and Syria following the devastating earthquake. During emergencies, it is the compassion of generous people like you that enables our partners on-the-ground to respond immediately to those who are most in need.

On behalf of everyone at Caritas Australia, I want to thank you for your unwavering support and compassion, and hope that you enjoy this edition of *Caritas News*.



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.

Editor: Connie Zehender
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Cover: Laxmi and her mother, Mankala, outside their home in Nepal.
Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.
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RECONNECTING WITH PROJECT COMPASSION

Last month, Caritas Australia's Africa Programs Coordinator, Sister Ivy Khoury, visited Zimbabwe and Mozambique to reconnect with some of the people you have supported through Project Compassion.

Almost six years ago, Caritas Australia met a remarkable young girl named Thandolwayo. She was just 12 years old at the time, and would walk seven kilometres through difficult terrain every day to collect contaminated water for her family. The health risks of drinking unclean water were great, but Thandolwayo and her family had no alternative. As a result, she struggled greatly at school because she was tired after this long journey every morning. Water scarcity often led to food shortages in her area and so she often went to school without enough food to concentrate.

Through Caritas Australia's partnership with Caritas Hwange, the community was able to install two solar-powered pumps and a 10,000 litre water tank. Today, Thandolwayo is a confident 16-year-old girl who is excelling in her studies.

Thandolwayo had a message to share with supporters like you: **"There are more children going to school now because we have water... I am so happy. Now that I can speak English, I am able to communicate with more people like you! Please don't ever forget me and the people in Zimbabwe. Thank you for all your help! I will never forget you."**

Sister Ivy also remarked: **"what a joy to see Thandolwayo again. I couldn't believe that she now speaks fluent English."**

Sister Ivy was also able to visit Priscilla, a grandmother and farmer who has been fighting to provide food for her family despite the increasing challenges of climate change-induced drought that has impacted Zimbabwe. Priscilla also features as one of Caritas Australia's stories for Project Compassion this year.

Since our previous visit, she was on the verge of facing further food security issues due to extreme weather conditions. However, because of the generosity of people like you, Priscilla and her community received emergency food aid to help them survive during the drought. Priscilla said: **"Caritas Australia helped the community so much. They taught us to use water wisely allowing us to keep living. I have also learnt to train others in conservation farming. I know now water is life."**

Many of you will also remember Anatercia from Project



Thandolwayo is now excelling in her studies.

Compassion last year. Anatercia had to take on many household responsibilities after her father passed away. She used to walk nearly five hours to collect water for her family.

To make matters worse, recent floods in Mozambique also wiped out all her family's crops. Fortunately, Anatercia and her family are safe and our partner Caritas Regional de Chokwe have organised for Anatercia to start secondary school in another district. Anatercia will miss her family, but she is very excited to have this opportunity to continue her studies.

"My dream is to be a nurse," Anatercia said. **"I want to help others. I want to be able to look after my mother, grandmother and grandfather who is blind."**

Thank you for supporting people like Thandolwayo, Priscilla

FOR ALL FUTURE GENERATIONS

HOW YOUR COMPASSION CHANGES LIVES FOR ALL FUTURE GENERATIONS

The compassion of generous supporters like you helps create lasting change today and for generations to come.

This year, Project Compassion brings to you the story of a girl from Nepal who was able to conquer numerous challenges in her life and become a leader to other girls in her village.

Sixteen-year-old girl Laxmi lives with her mother and siblings in one of the most remote communities in Nepal, with almost half of the population living below the poverty line.

Tragedy struck when Laxmi was just 10 years old. Her father, who worked hard to pay for his children's education, passed away. Laxmi was devastated. She used to love going to school but for the first time, she stopped attending her classes.

With your support, Laxmi joined a child's club that was run with the support of our partner Caritas Nepal, through the Nepal Livelihoods and Resilience Program. Child's clubs support students to develop their speaking, writing and leadership skills through extracurricular activities.

Thanks to the support of her child's club, Laxmi was encouraged to resume her education. She became an active member of her child's club, where she developed the skills and confidence to become a leader. She even advocated for clean water taps at her school, so that all the students can access water.

Laxmi is now excelling in her studies and working towards her dream of becoming a civil engineer. She continues to be involved in the child's club, serving as an advisor and mentoring the next generation of young leaders at her old school.

"I have to show them what I did with my talent. How I changed. Teach them what they can do. I want them to learn from the things I did," Laxmi said.

Thank you for helping change lives today – and For All Future Generations!

Along with your generous support, this program is also supported by the Australian Government, through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).



Thanks to your support, Laxmi joined a child's club and advocated for clean water taps at her school. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

NEPAL

HIMALAYAN HOMESTAYS TRANSFORMING LIVES

Nestled at the base of Annapurna Himalayan range in Nepal, is a homestay and agro-eco tourism centre that is helping local communities to share their culture with the rest of the world, while also earning sustainable incomes.

Your generosity helps provide support to the Machhapuchhre Agro-Eco Tourism Learning Center and Homestay (MALH) through our partner organisation Caritas Nepal. This innovative program aims to create additional sources of income and employment opportunities for rural farmers in Nepal, encourage organic farming practices and promote cultural learning, all against the spectacular backdrop of the Himalayas.

Tourism is a vital sector for Nepal, and the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the livelihoods of communities who rely on visitors to earn income. With international borders reopening, tourists can once again experience life in traditional Nepali homestays while also helping support the livelihoods of rural villagers in the Himalayas.

With your support, rural farmers in the Himalayas can also participate in training in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) technology to cultivate organic vegetables and produce healthy crops at a significantly higher rate. The produce can then be used to create organic Nepali meals for visitors to the homestays.



The Machhapuchhre Agro-Eco Tourism Learning Center and Homestay is helping families in Nepal broaden their income streams. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.



With your support, Rita was able to expand her handicrafts business. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

Rita is a mother of two children and a member of the Machhapuchhre Agro-Eco Tourism Learning Centre.

Thanks to the kindness of people like you, she was able to expand her handicrafts business through the program and now makes weavings, bags and hats to sell to tourists.



Your support helps people like Chandrabahadur to enhance their income. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

Chandrabahadur is a beekeeper who generates income from selling honey.

With the support of Caritas Nepal, he received a loan to expand his honey-making business and now has four hives that make honey.

Along with your generous support, this program is also supported by the Australian Government, through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).



Your support is helping people like Thu and his wife, Linh. Photo: Phan Tan Lam/Caritas Australia.



Thu helps make incense sticks near his home with members of his VSLA. Photo: Phan Tan Lam/Caritas Australia.

VIETNAM

YOUR SUPPORT IS EMPOWERING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Your generosity is supporting our local partners in Vietnam to implement programs designed to drive disability inclusion, by building awareness among communities and providing essential life skills training to people living with disability.

One person whose life has been transformed with your kind support is Thu.

When Thu was only 12 years old, he lost his leg after stepping on an unexploded landmine from the Vietnam War. Living with a disability in rural Vietnam presented many challenges for Thu, who worked mainly as a rice farmer. After his wife, Linh, suffered a stroke, Thu also had to take on the additional role of her carer.

Thu joined the Empowerment of People with Disabilities program, supported by Caritas Australia through our local partners, the Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD).

Through the program, Thu learnt livelihood, financial and independent living skills and also joined a Village

Savings and Loans Association (VSLA), where he could interact with other people with disabilities.

The VSLA helped Thu to obtain a loan so that he could set up a barber shop and earn extra income to support his family. The project also helped him build an accessible toilet for Linh, who has also become more independent thanks to the support of a physiotherapist.

“She is my wife and we have been living together and depending on each other, I am the one to be there with her and for her. She almost lost herself after the stroke and had to lean on me. I could understand how she felt because I had experienced the same at the age of 12 after a landmine accident took one of my legs.”

– Thu

Program Snapshot: Empowerment of People with Disabilities

Developed by our partner SRD, this program aims to empower adults and children with disabilities to actively participate in their communities. The key focus is physical and mental wellbeing, as well as the development of sustainable livelihoods.

“Many people with a disability in Vietnam feel that other people would only look at their disabilities rather than at their capacities,” says Toan Tran, SRD Program Manager.

“Most adults and children with disabilities are from low income groups and people with disabilities and their families have minimal opportunities to access health care service, education, income generation, vocational training and jobs.”

This is what your support has helped achieve:



106 children and youth with disabilities gained improved access to quality healthcare.



745 community members and caregivers participated in savings and loans and livelihood activities.



303 people reported increased income from livelihood interventions supported by the project.



129 children and youth with disabilities have access to quality education through inclusive school initiatives, home-based or community-based education. Of them, **63** children and youth with disabilities have improved education performance as evidenced by final assessment in inclusive school.

Your kind support and compassion has helped empower many people with disabilities in Vietnam – and across the world. Along with your generous support, this program is also supported by the Australian Government, through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

TÜRKIYE AND SYRIA EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE

When a disaster strikes, it is the generosity of people like you that enables our partners on-the-ground to respond to the needs of affected communities.

On 7 February, Türkiye and Syria were struck by a devastating series of earthquakes. Thousands of people were killed after the catastrophic 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck the two nations.

On both sides of the border, buildings collapsed and rescue efforts were made to recover survivors from piles of rubble. To make matters worse, the increasingly cold winter weather has added to the devastation, as the thousands left injured or homeless are stuck in bitter cold and freezing rain.

The death toll from the devastating earthquakes has now surpassed 50,000, as relief efforts continue to support communities affected by the disaster.

With your support, Caritas Australia has been working closely with Caritas agencies on the ground to respond to the devastation caused by the earthquake.

“Every single person, especially in southern Türkiye and in northwest Syria, they’ve all been personally touched by this crisis,” said Sally Thomas, Caritas Australia’s Humanitarian Lead for the Middle East.

“Our partners on the ground continue to work tirelessly to provide much-needed support to the earthquake survivors and assessing their short and long term needs to help them rebuild their lives and dignity through this difficult time,” she added.

The ongoing conflict in Syria has exacted a heavy toll on the country. It has created the largest refugee and displacement crisis of our time, with around 13 million Syrians forced from their homes – more than half of the total population. At least 6.8 million have fled the country, with 6.9 million displaced in Syria.

Survivors of the earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria urgently need humanitarian support in the form of shelter, food, healthcare, blankets and clean water. Your support means our partners on the ground can urgently distribute much-needed humanitarian aid including food baskets, blankets, mattresses, drinking water and hygiene kits to impacted families.

Caritas staff assessing earthquake damage in Hama, Syria. Photo: Caritas Internationalis.

CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENT CONTINUE TO DEVASTATE UKRAINE

After 12 months of conflict in Ukraine, the toll on civilians has been catastrophic. Over eight million Ukrainians have been forced from their homes and fled to neighbouring countries, while a further 5.4 million have sought refuge in other parts of Ukraine, where they face the further threat of violence and displacement.

Across the country, homes and vital infrastructure have been destroyed with critical services like power, heating and water affected as the government tries to ration the existing resources and energy. This is particularly challenging with the brutal winter that the country has faced.

Our partners Caritas Ukraine and Caritas Spes Ukraine have been working tirelessly to provide emergency support to those in need during this war. But this is only possible with the support of generous people like you.

Since the escalation of the conflict on 24 February last year, our partners Caritas Ukraine and Caritas Spes Ukraine, with your ongoing support, have assisted close to 5 million people affected by the war. In neighbouring Moldova, our partner CRS Moldova has provided 10,000 Ukrainian refugees with safe and dignified transitional accommodation.

“We have always said that we want to do more than give a box of food or a hot meal. So, from the start, we have been providing psychological support for trauma, and support with medicine, shelter or blankets,” said Odarka Bordun, Fundraising Manager at Caritas Ukraine.

“We also distribute things like clothes and other goods, because very often people who have fled just take documents and cash, that’s it. They arrive in another city, and they have nothing. So, we have programs to support them and get them the basics that they need.”



Caritas Ukraine is providing vital supplies to local hospitals that are experiencing shortages due to the war. Photo: Caritas Ukraine.

In Ukraine, your generosity has helped:

- 

More than **1.9 million** people receive food distributions
- 

More than **330,000** people receive access to clean water and sanitation
- 

Over **100,00** people receive support for health services including lifesaving medication and first aid kits
- 

More than **690,000** people receive hygiene kits
- 

More than **290,000** people receive protection services, including psychological support, access to child-friendly spaces, home care visits for the elderly and people with disability, and information to prevent exploitation and human trafficking
- 

Over **95,000** people receive multipurpose cash assistance to help them buy basic goods

Thank you for your generosity and kindness, and for continuing to stand by those whose lives have been turned upside down by war and conflict.

OUR COMMUNITY

Schools and parishes across Australia raise funds for Project Compassion

Since the launch of Project Compassion in February, thousands of Australian schools, parishes and supporters have come together to raise funds for people living in some of the most vulnerable communities worldwide. See how different communities across Australia have celebrated Project Compassion so far.

Hobart and Launceston, Tasmania

Caritas Australia Advancement Director, Richard Landels, travelled south to Tasmania to launch Project Compassion in both Hobart and Launceston.

Starting in Hobart at St Mary's Cathedral, Fr Leonard (the Archdiocese Administrator) and Fr Paschal provided a warm and generous welcome, both great champions for Caritas Australia. Posters were put up in the Cathedral and the parishioners collected Project Compassion boxes on the way out.

The Homily focused on Project Compassion, emphasising what we can do for others, not just our friends but everyone.

In Launceston, school leaders from secondary and primary schools attended the Project Compassion launch at the Church of the Apostles and the children were commissioned by Fr Brooks as Project Compassion leaders in their community.

Perth, Western Australia

In Perth, over 68 primary and secondary schools from four dioceses joined our Project Compassion launch, representing approximately 2,000 students from Years 6-12.

Servite College and St Kieran Catholic Primary School served as phenomenal co-host schools, providing the IT know-how to facilitate an online webinar with Caritas Australia CEO Kirsty Robertson, who shared her own journey working in Nepal and other countries. They also shared the story of Laxmi, which you have already read in this edition of *Caritas News*.

The highly engaging webinar produced many questions from the schools during the Q&A.



Students celebrate the launch of Project Compassion in Western Australia. Photo: Caritas Australia.



Students from the Sandhurst Diocese flip pancakes for Project Compassion.

Townsville and Brisbane, Queensland

On the other side of the country, the Townsville Diocese held its Project Compassion launch in Ingham, approximately 130km north of Townsville. Students from the Ingham district attended, as well as more than 50 people who travelled from Townsville to join in the launch.

The season of Lent was also in full swing at the Archdiocese of Brisbane launch for Project Compassion.

With over 76 schools attending, it was a full house at St Stephen's Cathedral with many engaged students who enjoyed pancake races, chalk art (about faith, social justice and ecological justice) and a formation session with Caritas Australia Earthcare Coordinator Alice Carwardine.



Caritas Australia's First Australian Associate Director, Christine Rhazi, attended the Project Compassion launch in Townsville. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Giving Back this Project Compassion



With Project Compassion officially launched, fundraising is another important way to unite communities. We know that fundraising can be daunting, but we believe that it can also be FUN!

It is an opportunity to raise awareness about important issues and a chance for the community to take part in social justice. A better future for all generations starts with your support.

Bring your friends, family, school community or workplace together to participate in a Project Compassion fundraising event! Together you will raise awareness and funds for the thousands of children, women and men worldwide who have to go to extraordinary lengths each day to access basic necessities like food, water, education or health care.

Sandhurst and Traralgon, Victoria

Two-hours east of Melbourne, a wonderful launch event for Project Compassion was hosted in Traralgon in Victoria.

Schools travelled up to two hours from around the Sale Diocese to listen to Bishop Greg Bennet, a passionate advocate of Caritas Australia, call on the students to lead change and be the difference for future generations.

A Project Compassion launch event was also held in the Sandhurst Diocese with students flipping pancakes to raise funds for vulnerable communities.



Teachers at Sacred Heart School Tatura flipped pancakes on Shrove Tuesday for Project Compassion. Photo: Caritas Australia.



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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