

CaritasNews

CHANGE STARTS WITH YOU

#166 | SUMMER 2022



STANDING TOGETHER IN SOLIDARITY

MESSAGES OF LOVE:

Responses to Aloma's story from supporters

VOICES FROM THE FIELD:

Update on Lebanon's unfolding economic crisis

STORIES OF RESILIENCE:

How Maria's training led her to new opportunities and improvements in her village

OUR COMMUNITY:

Women for the World, our volunteers, Youth Summit updates

THANK YOU

Last year, the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic left many South East Asian countries in dire economic circumstances. The crisis in Lebanon continued to unfold throughout 2021, as the nation experienced hyperinflation in its currency, where as a result, many have been unable to afford basic goods and services. There was change and turmoil occurring in Afghanistan, numerous natural disasters, issues of climate justice and political conflict.

However, it is paramount that our faith remains strong, as hope can make a world of difference when we find ourselves in deep darkness.

The unwavering support of our partners and your generosity have built on the hope and resilience of those affected by these crises. Your kindness goes a long way, and is a contributing factor as to why many are standing tall and strong in the face of adversity.

The attitude we show towards the stranger on the road should not be dissimilar to the one we show towards our friends and family. When we show love and kindness to our sisters and brothers experiencing daily struggle and uncertainty, we help establish a form of universal friendship.

Pope Francis invites us all to show solidarity and put the needs of others ahead of our own. Your support strengthens this vision and it is the stones that pave the road towards a more just and peaceful world.



With gratitude,

Kirsty Robertson

Kirsty Robertson
Chief Executive Officer
Caritas Australia

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As our world deals with many crises, we stand together, and build resilience and strength, as one human family.



Writer/Editor: Connie Zehender
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Cover: Maria from Tanzania benefited by your support.
Photo: August Lucky/Caritas Australia.
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PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION

VIETNAM - EMPOWERMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

PARTNER: Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD)

The Empowerment of People with Disabilities program focuses on physical and mental wellbeing, as well as livelihoods development for people and children living with disabilities. This program aims to develop community-based clubs as a common place where everyone can come together, support one another and improve their lives.

Opportunities are created for children and adults living with disabilities, helping them integrate into the community. It also enables their families to access opportunities to improve their income and living conditions.

Mr Hoa's Story

Mr Hoa lives in the Quảng Trị Province in Vietnam. He has difficulty with mobility due to an accident that occurred in 1978 whilst he was herding cows. Today, Mr Hoa earns his living by fishing in the river at the back of his house, and by farming chickens and cultivating sugar. He lives with his wife, who is only able to help out with light work due to a spinal cord operation she had in 2013.

Since joining the program, Mr Hoa and his family have seen major improvements in their income and financial situation, and have been brought closer to their community. They have also learned about Disaster Risk Reduction and feel confident on what needs to be done prior, during and after a disaster, as well as where the nearest evacuation place is.



Hoa packing the sugar cane for sale. Photo: Tran Thi Thanh Toan/Centre for Sustainable Rural Development.

"I am proud of myself because I have been able to feed myself and my family, despite of my mobility difficulty. I can say that I am equal and able to join the community like other villagers without any difference", says Mr Hoa.

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

IMPACT



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



129 children and youth with disabilities have access to quality education through inclusive school initiatives, home-based or community-based education.



303 people provided with sustainable livelihood opportunities to produce enough income to meet their basic needs.



520 people are better prepared to respond to disasters.



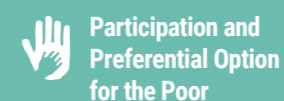
12 People with disability associations report increased effectiveness in their coordination and collaboration with government agencies and other disability network.



Over the six weeks of Lent, Project Compassion is an extraordinary demonstration of the faith, love and generosity of Caritas Australia's supporters. At this time, we stand in solidarity with vulnerable communities to support them as they forge a path out of poverty. This year, Project Compassion begins on Ash Wednesday, 2 March 2022. You can learn more and donate, fundraise, or join a Caritas Conversation with programs staff at lent.caritas.org.au.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Look out for the CST icons throughout this edition.



MESSAGES OF LOVE



Thanks to your generosity and kindness, Aloma has gained numerous skills. Photo credit: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

Aloma's story was featured in the 2021 Women for the World campaign. She joined a program run by the Socio Pastoral Action Center Foundation Inc. (SPACFI), supported by Caritas Australia after her village and community were affected by a typhoon.

With your generous support, Aloma learned numerous skills, including

bookkeeping, ecological conservation skills and undertook training in Disaster Risk Reduction.

After reading her story of hope and resilience, many of our supporters reached out to Aloma by sending her messages of love, kindness and support.

Here are some the messages sent to Aloma:



Dear Aloma, you are not alone – women all over the world think of you, care for you and send positive support. You are strong. Keep going for yourself, your family, your community.

To the women of Aloma's community. Your ability to be resilient during this time of pandemic and disaster makes me feel humble. Keep holding onto your faith in God, your community and, more importantly, yourself. This brings hope and we all need hope to keep going. God bless. We think you are amazing and we believe you can make a huge difference in your community. All the best we are praying for you.

Dear Aloma, Greetings from Geelong, Australia. We are thinking of you and praying for you. Keep smiling, everything will change for the better and you can enjoy good days with your family and friends.

To dear Aloma and all your women companions, wishing you a bright future full of hope. I am sorry life is hard for so many of you now. You have a wonderful spirit of doing all you can to help. Each day I pray that our God will bless and protect you.

Aloma! Believe in the power of God's mercy at all times. Pray for his assistance and generosity and you will be rewarded as you strive to put your life and those of your loved ones back together again. He will never fail you. Blessings and love.

Thanks to your ongoing support, women like Aloma have the opportunity to rebuild their lives, receive education and training, and empower other women and members of their community. Your generosity goes a long way.

This Mother's Day, twoface LABEL is collaborating with Caritas Australia with a limited-edition cardigan that is Australian-made with Merino wool.



The Mother's Day Cardi is the cardi that gives back with 40% of profits going directly to Caritas Australia. Buy one for Mother's Day now at the exclusive discounted price of \$390 (RRP: \$420).

Ordering information:

All orders must be made by **20 March 2022**.

To order a Mother's Day Cardi:

- Visit the twoface LABEL website twofacelabel.com and click on the Mother's Day Cardi
- Select one of the four available sizes (S, M, L, XL)
- Select the quantity (maximum of five per person)
- Use discount code **CARITAS22**.



UPDATES ON THE ONGOING CRISIS IN LEBANON

The dire financial situation in Lebanon has been unfolding for more than two years and the country continues to face what is likely to be its biggest humanitarian crisis yet. According to the World Bank, Lebanon's situation may be in the top three economic crises from the last 150 years.

Since October 2019, the Middle Eastern nation has faced hyperinflation of its currency, and resources such as power, water, fuel, medicine and food, have become increasingly scarce.

People now pay up to 20 times more for basic goods, while many are living on decreased salaries. Families are increasingly unable to afford housing, education, health care, transportation and food. Over one million Syrian and Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon are also at risk, with more than 90% living under the poverty line.

Additionally, the country continues its efforts to rebuild after the devastating explosion that took place in Beirut in August 2020. The blast killed more than 200 people, injured more than 7,500, left about 300,000 homeless, and occurred in the midst of the economic crisis and as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded.

Thanks to your generosity, Caritas Australia has been able to provide support to Caritas Lebanon in assisting those affected by the long-term effects on the blast.

To provide support to Lebanon, please donate to the Caritas Australia Middle East Regional Appeal at www.caritas.org.au/donate/emergency-appeals/middle-east/



CAPTION: Caritas Lebanon volunteers provide food, water and medical aid. Photo credit: Caritas Lebanon.

- **3,708** hygiene kits provided.
- **7,982** food kits distributed to households.
- **245,828** hot meals have been distributed to those in need.
- **1,541** individuals were provided with psychological first aid.
- **509** injured provided with medical first aid.
- **72,764** medicines distributed to patients.
- **7,710** medical consultations.
- **1,725** houses assessed for damage and 1,300 have been renovated.



VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Alphonse Ayrout
Program Development Manager,
Caritas Lebanon

"The ongoing crisis in Lebanon has critically affected many facets of the country. It has notably manifested itself in rising deprivation of health care, medicines, services, education, employment, housing and assets," said Alphonse Ayrout, Program Development Manager at Caritas Lebanon.

"A very large percentage of the local population, including refugees from Syria and other parts of the world currently

residing in Lebanon, are experiencing food insecurity and are unable to access basic goods and services. Food prices are out of reach for most, and retailers are facing serious challenges to restock and keep their businesses afloat."

Caritas Lebanon is offering support to the country's most vulnerable people and those affected by the multi-faceted crises to meet their acute needs in terms of healthcare, education, protection and livelihoods.

"The Intervention for vulnerable refugees and host communities in Lebanon program aims to provide relief to refugees and host community members. We are trying to assist vulnerable communities in meeting their basic needs through providing essential primary and secondary health services, access to quality education, and emergency cash assistance that can answer to urgent protection needs and concern. We are also aiming to support shelters that provide safe spaces and counselling for high-risk individuals."



Before the A+ program, I didn't know that we had rights and was too shy to express my opinions. Now I want to motivate others to participate in activities in the village, I want to help women to particularly become aware of their rights and to help others to achieve their dream.

- Maria, Tanzania.



Maria can now access clean and safe water.
Photo: August Lucky/Caritas Australia.

STORIES OF RESILIENCE:

MARIA'S STORY OF STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE

About the program



The A+ program, which is supported by Caritas Australia's local partner, Diocese of Mbulu Development Department (DMDD) supports marginalised communities by improving access to water, hygiene and sanitation, and boosting food security. The program's strengths-based approach encourages communities to envision their goals, and identify the skills and other resources they can use to reach their objectives.

Twenty-seven-year-old Maria lives with her husband and six children (four are her own and two are her younger brothers) in her village in Tanzania experiencing long-term food and water insecurity. With little education or way of earning a sustainable income, Maria and her husband struggled to feed their young family on a daily basis.

Maria and her husband have a small farm, growing onions, maize, beans and vegetables. However, water scarcity led to poor harvests and a low income. Maria also had to walk a four-kilometre round trip daily to fetch water for her household.

Maria did not have the opportunity to learn to read or write. Her own children walk nearly five kilometres to school, while her 15-year-old brother is already working as a casual labourer to help the family.

Maria joined the A+ program and participated in all its activities. These included training in sustainable farming techniques, entrepreneurship, literacy and numeracy, gender awareness, environmental protection, water, hygiene and sanitation.

With your generous help, Maria's community upgraded the drinking water systems and extended water services in their village so that they no longer have to walk long distances to access safe, clean water. Improved irrigation also boosted food production, enabling the

family to have enough to eat all year round.

Maria and her husband can now produce enough food to feed their family and enough crops to sell, which has increased their income. Improved hygiene and sanitation have also reduced the spread of waterborne diseases and COVID-19.

Maria's new skills helped her acquire the role of waterpoint caretaker, which involves collecting fees and keeping the area clean. She also participates in her village's Savings and Lending group, which helps her to make the most of her earnings. Maria's confidence led her to speak out at village meetings and get elected as local councilor.

Your support is helping vulnerable people like Maria and her family to draw on individual and community strengths and build a better future.

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



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

Caritas Australia's program has a very positive impact in my life. I am feeling proud because my community respects me. It is a good lesson that everything is possible when you put some effort.

To support programs like the one Maria attended please donate at: www.caritas.org.au/give.

Over 2,400 people in Maria's community, and 27,000 across Tanzania and Malawi, have participated in the program so far:



14,395 people, including 8,275 women are now able to access clean water, through approximately 30 new or rehabilitated waterpoints



18,627 people, including 10,536 women, have improved access to sufficient food



8,375 people, including 5,200 women, have increased incomes



20,085 people, including 10,274 women, have greater understanding of hygiene, sanitation practices



17,045 people, including 10,651 women, participated in gender awareness and women's rights training



Be a Neighbour to those in need

Become a Regular Giver Today



Artworkers near Djilpin Arts in Beswick, Northern Territory, Australia. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

COVID-19 UPDATE

THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 AROUND THE WORLD

COVID-19 IMPACT ON FIRST AUSTRALIANS

COVID-19 has affected the lives of many people around the world and First Australian communities were not an exception to this.

As the virus impacted the Northern Territory, Caritas Australia's partner Djilpin Arts was able to continue to provide the community with meaningful opportunities to make an income by making artwork, various artefacts, weaving and gathering bush materials.

In 2021, Caritas Australia funded an Arts Shed in Katherine. Djilpin Arts was able to continue to sell their products online, as tourist numbers decreased due to community lockdowns and border closures.

Djilpin Arts provided a safe environment within the community. They quickly responded by developing a COVID-19 Action Plan. The community was updated regularly and was given access to masks and hand sanitiser.

Another of Caritas Australia's First Australian Partners, Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation in Western Sydney, also found creative ways to

support families to continue to build community and look after their loved ones.

Some of the challenges faced included fear and concerns regarding COVID-19 and vaccines. To counteract this, the Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation provided detailed information about vaccination locations and supported the community with access to facts.

Food hampers were also delivered to 50 families connected with Baabayn. Hawkesbury Helping Hands initially donated drinks and then offered to help with donations for Baabayn. Some of the students were provided with Internet toggles, so they could access online school activities. Some laptops were also sourced. For the mums, there were phone calls, Zoom sessions, which some of these included YouTube videos. The children were provided with art packages, and 48 people were given self-care packages.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Despite having little to no cases in the first year of the pandemic, COVID-19 struck Papua New Guinea in 2021. Early last year, the Pacific nation faced a potentially catastrophic outbreak of the virus.

Through the CAN DO program, Caritas Australia was able to assist vulnerable communities and health care workers in Papua New Guinea with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Almost \$250,000 worth of PPE, including masks, gloves and gowns, were distributed across all 19 dioceses in the country.

The PPE distributed benefited 235 health facilities and approximately 1400 health workers. By having the health workers protected, they would be able to serve communities with numerous other health issues and concerns as well.

With the resources that were given, health workers were able to continue serving their communities, whilst other Dioceses kept the PPEs and issued them on a needs basis, with the concern of a potential second wave of COVID-19.



Caritas Australia staff unloading container with PPE. Photo: Roslyn Kuniata/Caritas Australia

CARITAS AUSTRALIA SUPPORTS INDIA

Caritas Australia raised an emergency appeal to mobilise funds and provide support for people in India affected by the second wave of COVID-19. Your generosity provided relief and services to vulnerable communities in the country.

The destruction of livelihoods disturbed many during the second wave of the pandemic in India. Many of the people living in rural areas, such as Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, were seriously affected by the re-emergence of the virus. Agricultural communities, informal migrant workers, people living with disabilities, widows, orphans, and daily wage labour communities struggled with limited access to food and resources. Lockdowns also compromised sources of daily income and the prices of essential food items almost doubled.

Caritas India, with the support from Caritas Australia, assisted the most vulnerable families residing in the Gram Nirman project villages. In consultation with existing community organisations, 2476 families were identified and provided with dry ration kits. Each kit included 20kg rice, 5kg wheat flour, edible oil, lentils, and salt which was sufficient for approximately 20 days for an average family of five people.



Caritas Australia providing support to Caritas India during COVID-19 second wave. Photo: Caritas India

OUR COMMUNITY



Volunteering for more than two decades

Peter Stephenson has recently celebrated 22 years of service at Caritas Australia. As one of our most faithful volunteers, he has had the opportunity to see the ongoing effects of our work and the work of our partners in Australia and overseas.

Peter joined us in January 2000 and has since been an integral part of the Marketing and Communications team.

'When I started, we had about 20 employees', says Peter.

'I was given drawers full of slides, prints and negatives to turn into a digital format, years before digital cameras were common in the organisation.'

Throughout his time at Caritas Australia, Peter has enjoyed 'the friendliness and co-operation, encouragement and team spirit of the staff', as well as the great development and scope of the organisation.

'Since the beginning I have been aware of their common and continuing dedication to the betterment of the disadvantaged and poor in the world.'

When asked about Peter, the Marketing and Communications team gave a resounding response that he is incredibly important to the work they do – his dedication, his wisdom and of course, his jokes!

Ecological Youth Summit

The first two youth summits took place late last year. These events were student-led and designed, and invited participants from around the country to talk about environmental issues and sustainability.

These summits were delivered by Caritas Australia's Catholic Earthcare program with the purpose of raising the consciousness of young people and encouraging them to share their stories of action and advocacy around issues affecting the environment.

The events employed a blended delivery model, hosting the first summit face-to-face and the second one online.

The first summit was originally scheduled to be held in Sydney on 28 August 2021. However, due COVID-19 restrictions, the event was rescheduled for 30 September 2021 and was held face-to-face at Aquinas College in Perth. Students from 13 different schools registered and participated in the summit to engage in environmental dialogue.

"Youth summits are a fantastic opportunity for young people and school leaders to come together and talk about global issues that might impact their futures" said Sabrina Stevens, Youth Participation Coordinator at Caritas Australia.



First Youth Summit in Perth. Photo: Sabrina Stevens/Caritas Australia

Q & A Five minutes with Bishop Vincent Long

Q: What was the political landscape like in Vietnam before you decided to migrate to Australia?

A: *I escaped South Vietnam after it had fallen to the Vietnamese communist forces in 1975. My world descended into total chaos with an international embargo, wars against China and Cambodia, forced collectivisation and the insidious spread of what were termed "re-education camps", but were really communist gulags.*

Q: Could you tell us what your journey was like and whether you experienced any hardship along the way?

A: *My boat journey was risky, and there were far more people on the boat than it could carry safely. By the*



third day, we'd run out of food, water and fuel and were at the mercy of the elements. On the seventh day, we drifted near an oil rig, half alive and half dead. Fortunately, we were rescued, and brought to a refugee camp off the coast of Malaysia, where I stayed for over a year. In December 1981, I was accepted and brought to Australia.

Q: What made you want to join the Church?

A: *Growing up in war, all I wanted to do was to help people who suffered. In Australia I was finally able to follow my dream of becoming a priest, and eventually a Bishop, something I never would have imagined when I was clinging to that boat on the oceans.*

Today, even though it has been decades since I fled the war, it all comes flooding back as I see footage of the situation in Afghanistan.

Q: You mentioned the current situation in Afghanistan earlier. What do you think Australia needs to do in order to assist the people of Afghanistan during this crisis?

A: *I think we need to offer additional refugee resettlement places for Afghan refugees, as we did in 2015 for Syrian and Iraqi refugees. We need to extend the temporary visas of all Afghan citizens in Australia so that they will not be at risk of forced return to a dangerous country, and extend permanent protection to any Afghans on temporary protection visas.*

Finally, we need to support family reunion applications for Afghan Australians' whose families are in grave danger. We need to show compassion and solidarity towards the Afghan people.



Employees from the Adelaide Diocesan Centre trekking. Photo: Adelaide Diocesan Centre.

Women for the World

Tracey Tessitore from Adelaide hosted a walking experience called a 'Trek up the Hill' to support vulnerable women from around the world. Participants walked up Carrick Hill and around Brownhill Creek and were each given a lanyard and a booklet with a story of a woman featured in Caritas Australia's programs.

As the group climbed around Brown Hill, they reflected on their designated story, the challenges these women faced and how their lives had changed since joining the programs. When they reached the top of the hill, they all shared a meal and discussed their stories, all to raise money for Caritas Australia's Women for the World campaign.



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.

FOR THE LATEST UPDATES HEAD TO:

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MIX logo

SOMETIMES ALL WE NEED IS A HELPING HAND FROM OUR NEIGHBOURS.

Become part of our community of neighbours,
compassionate people helping to bring equality,
justice and dignity to people around the world.



Be an agent of change, be a messenger of hope, be a Regular Giver and make a lasting impact

I WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A CARITAS NEIGHBOUR AND DONATE MONTHLY.

- \$18** a month could buy water filters to provide families and students in Malawi with access to clean and safe water
- \$27** a month could cover learning materials for children with severe disabilities in Vietnam
- \$51** a month could provide seeds for families in the Democratic Republic of Congo for sustainable farming activities
- My choice of: \$** _____ **PER MONTH**

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Signature:

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Bank: Commonwealth BSB: 062 438 Acct: 10072432
Acct Name: Caritas Australia Ref:



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- I would like my receipt sent to the above email address to help save administration costs and make sure more of my donation goes where it is needed most.
- I would like to receive information about leaving a Gift in my Will to Caritas Australia.
- I have already left a Gift in my Will to Caritas Australia.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



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