

# Top crises the world cannot ignore

Core issues affecting vulnerable communities across the world



Johnson with his wife Elizabeth in their field of failed crops on their homestead in Hwange district in north-western Zimbabwe. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

# Creating a better future for vulnerable communities



At Caritas Australia, our mission is to tackle poverty and inequality, and to ensure that those we serve can thrive and live with dignity.

When crises strike, we work in partnership with local organisations to bring aid and relief to people whose lives have been devastated by a natural disaster, war and/or by political conflict.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we serve in 20 countries and work through more than 60 partnerships to bring support and hope to those who need it most.

As the second half of 2023 comes to a close, I find myself reflecting on how much we have achieved together this year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and dedication to the work we do.

War, political upheaval, pandemics, famine and natural disasters exacerbated by ecological changes have continued to make headlines.

These ongoing crises leave many in dire need for humanitarian assistance.

The generosity and compassion that you show towards these communities today can help us reach out to them and provide them with assistance during difficult times.

Now more than ever, Caritas Australia is working hard alongside our partners to stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers facing crises, and to create a better future for vulnerable people across the world.

As always, I thank you for your support and for your commitment to helping create a better and more just world for those living in vulnerable communities.

**With gratitude,**

*Kirsty Robertson*

**Kirsty Robertson**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Caritas Australia**



## Refugee Crisis

Democratic Republic of Congo, Ukraine and Sudan

The refugee crisis around the world continues to increase as issues of political upheaval, conflict and war remain prominent in our society.

According to the United Nations, over 103 million people worldwide have been forced to flee their homes, as a result of persecution, conflict, violence and human rights violations. Among them, are nearly 32.5 million refugees, and 41 percent are children.

With your generous support, we are working with our local partner organisations on the ground around the world, to support displaced people and refugees, facing the challenges of upheaval, poverty, disrupted education and livelihoods.



IDP Camp near Goma in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Photo: Caritas Goma.



Ukrainian refugees at the border. Photo: Caritas Network.



Woman outside IDP camp near Goma. Photo: Caritas Goma



Refugees in Sudan. Photo: Shutterstock.

## Ukraine

The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine continues to force millions of people throughout the nation to migrate to neighbouring countries including Poland, Moldova, Hungary and Romania.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the escalation of conflict in Ukraine has caused civilian casualties and destruction of civilian infrastructure, forcing people to flee their homes seeking safety, protection and assistance. Since the conflict began, more than 31 million people have been forced to leave their homes, with many crossing the borders into neighbouring countries.

The number of people fleeing the Eastern European nation will only increase as this humanitarian crisis continues to unfold.

## Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo is facing ongoing conflict from armed groups which have been attacking villages, stealing livestock and slaughtering entire families.

Over the past year, these attacks are not only increasing radically in frequency but also in violence. Across the Ituri and North Kivu provinces, hundreds of people have been killed in attacks on villages, as well as thousands of houses destroyed.

More than 5.6 million people have been forced from their homes – including over half a million in the past year alone and over 1 million have fled to neighbouring countries.

To make matters worse, 26 million people are facing acute food insecurity – one of the highest numbers in the world.

## Sudan

Millions of people have been displaced within Sudan and to surrounding countries, as they flee violent conflict. This has resulted in already scarce resources being pushed beyond breaking point, with urgent aid desperately needed to prevent the spread of hunger, disease and further violence.

People are in need of access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, shelter, food and medical supplies.

Over 1,100 people have been killed and 12,000 injured as a result of the fighting with a further 3 million forced to flee their homes. Over 368,000 children have been forced from their homes, with the crisis predominantly affecting women and children.

# Africa Food Crisis

Learn how food insecurity and famine are affecting communities in Africa.

Food is a fundamental human right, yet an estimated 828 million people go hungry every day. Not having enough to eat has ripple effects on health, hygiene, the ability to get an education and earn a living, and the ability for communities to flourish.

Since last year, the Africa Food Crisis has escalated to unprecedented levels. Currently, over 81.6 million people are facing acute food insecurity across eastern Africa.

Additionally, the region has been struck by multiple challenges at once, including drought, flooding, rising food and fuel prices, COVID-19, locust plagues and ongoing conflict and displacement.

Vulnerable families are fleeing their homes in search of clean water, food and farmable land, leading to a significant spike in internally displaced persons in the region. As food supplies dwindle, it is estimated that over 70 percent of displaced persons in need will experience hunger.

Caritas Australia is supporting our partners in Africa to provide lifesaving essentials to families who have been displaced and communities that have been impacted by crippling food insecurity and famine through:

- Emergency food supplies to people at risk of hunger and malnutrition.
- Clean drinking water and sanitation support, including the establishment of latrines.
- Emergency cash assistance to the most vulnerable families.

Food security is a powerful ally in the fight against poverty and achieving global food security will help reduce a community's vulnerability to disease, and enable people to invest more time in building their livelihoods, strengthening their economy and caring for vulnerable community members.

Your support is urgently needed. Please give what you can today to provide lifesaving aid and assistance to families affected by this worsening crisis.

Food distribution in Zimbabwe. Photo: Caritas Hwange.

A Top crises the world cannot ignore

## ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia is facing its worst drought in nearly 40 years, with an estimated 20 million people in need of urgent assistance.

This is on top of one of the worst locust swarms in the past decade and ongoing conflict that has displaced thousands of vulnerable people.

It is estimated that more than 4.5 million livestock have died since late 2021, and at least 30 million weakened and emaciated livestock are at risk.

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Ayoyo, a complaints volunteer in her community in southwestern Ethiopia.  
Photo: Zacharias Abubeker/Caritas Australia.

## SOMALIA

Somalia is on the brink of famine, with nearly 8 million people facing extreme hunger and food insecurity. The last famine declared in Somalia, in 2011, killed a quarter of a million people. Unless urgent action is taken, Somalia may face a catastrophic humanitarian disaster.

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Marian and her daughter at an internally displaced persons camp in Gedo, southern Somalia.  
Photo: Miriam Donohue/Trocaire.

## KENYA

More than 4.35 million people in Kenya are at risk of severe hunger, particularly up north in areas such as Marsabit.

The impact of drought and food shortages is felt more severely by those who are most vulnerable – children, mothers and the elderly. High levels of malnutrition are rampant among communities, primarily pastoralists who rely on water to raise their livestock.

A national state of disaster has been declared with vulnerable communities struggling to access food and clean water.



Talaso and her two children are living through one of the worst droughts in decades.  
Photo: Thom Flint/CAFOD.



Community members of the Falese'ela Environment Protection Society are working to protect their home from the impacts of climate change. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

# Climate Change

And its impact on vulnerable communities across the world

The ongoing changes in the climate have increasingly exacerbated the number of natural disasters that occur across the world. In recent times, countries across the Pacific and Asia regions, and all across the world, have been affected by rising sea levels, typhoons, earthquakes and droughts, amongst other disasters.

Since many of the communities we work with heavily depend on environmental regularity for food and water security to support their livelihoods, economy, health and wellbeing, a changing climate poses one of the greatest threats to their lives – and risks driving them further into poverty.

Low-income communities, indigenous people, people with disabilities, elderly people, women and children are often more susceptible to the risks posed by climate impacts, including cyclones, floods and earthquakes. These communities may have fewer existing resources to help them deal with these impacts, such as limited access to food and water.

According to a paper published by the World Bank in 2020, between 32 to 132 million additional people will be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030 due to climate change.

Thanks to your generosity, we support programs across Africa, Asia and the Pacific that combat the increasing effects of climate change and support Disaster Risk Reduction training.



Shaniella in her school's garden.  
Photo: Neil Nuija/Caritas Australia Solomon Islands.



Priscilla in her drought-affected fields of millet next to her home in Zimbabwe. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

### Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the Pacific region and in the world. In 2021, the World Risk Report put the Pacific nation as the second most at risk country when it comes to natural disasters.

Vulnerability to natural disasters, a lack of basic infrastructure and civil unrest have combined to make it one of the least developed nations in the Pacific.

We are helping Solomon Islands' communities improve access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene, promote social justice, be more prepared for natural disasters and to share health messages to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

### Zimbabwe

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.

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.

**With your generosity and support, we can continue working alongside our partners abroad to combat the ongoing effects of climate change, and provide much-needed assistance to communities affected by it.**