

Stewarding change for a better tomorrow

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Catholic Agency for International Aid and Development



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The earth will not continue to offer its harvest, except with faithful stewardship. We cannot say we love the land and then take steps to destroy it for use by future generations.

- Pope John XXIII



We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. At Caritas Australia, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land upon which our offices are based. This land always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Caritas Australia offices are located on the lands of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation in Sydney, the Boon Wurrung People and Woiewurrung (Wurundjeri) Peoples of the Kulin Nation in Melbourne, the Whadjuk of the Noongar Nation in Perth, the Turrbal and Jagera People in Brisbane, and the Ngunnawal People in Canberra.

We pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture and hopes of First Australians. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to this country and we commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of reconciliation.

Cover and Back cover: Monoranjon and Anita live in a coastal region in southwest Bangladesh that is highly vulnerable to climate change.
Photo: Caritas Australia.

Inside cover: A view of scenery in Upolu island in Samoa, where Caritas Australia works with local partners to support clean water projects.
Photo: Caritas Australia.

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Our Story

For over 60 years, Caritas Australia has worked hand in hand with the most marginalised and remote communities in Australia and overseas. We work with our partners towards a world where all can thrive and reach their full potential.

As the international aid and development agency of the Catholic Church, Caritas Australia works with and for all people, to address immediate needs and long-term goals, regardless of religion, race or political beliefs.

Through partnerships with local organisations and Church networks, and as a member of Caritas Internationalis, one of the largest humanitarian networks in the world, we are able to reach where the need is greatest and work together for a just future.

Through locally-led programs, we accompany communities to build on existing local strengths and resources, supporting them to drive their own development, for more transformative and sustainable change. When a crisis hits, we work through our local partnerships to bring aid and relief to people whose lives have been devastated by natural disaster or conflict.

Caritas Australia has a rich history of partnership with parishes, schools and communities across Australia. We advocate for social and ecological justice for those most impacted by inequality. Above all, with shared compassion and hope, we work towards a just future for all.

OUR INSPIRATION

Caritas Australia is inspired by the Gospel, which finds its expression in Catholic Social Tradition. Jesus returned as a young adult to his home town of Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30).

He chose light. Coming home, he knew this meant a fresh way of understanding himself and the world. He was to be an agent for change, for loving relationships. He had a vision of freedom. It is a vision we share, one of justice, dignity and hope.

OUR MISSION

In the spirit of the Gospel, we work in partnership with communities in Australia and overseas to achieve their development goals and to thrive.

OUR VISION

Justice, dignity and hope for humanity and all of God's creation.

Justice



The spirit of the Lord is upon me,
for He has anointed me to bring good
news to the poor.

Dignity



He has sent me to proclaim
release to captives, sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free.

Hope



To proclaim the year of the
Lord's favour.



Talaso's village in northern Kenya has experienced consecutive years of drought. Photo: Thom Flint/CAFOD.

From our Chair



As our world rapidly changes, Caritas Australia has evolved to meet the urgent needs of vulnerable communities both in Australia and globally. The rise in poverty, inequality, and displacement demands more from us as an organisation, and the work we do has never been more vital.

In recent years, we have faced an unprecedented increase in global crises – from political upheaval and famine, to the ongoing threats of climate change. Over the last twelve months, we have witnessed the devastating Türkiye-Syria earthquake, the never-ending horrors of the war in Ukraine, the escalating conflict and famine spreading through Sudan, and the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. These challenges have dramatically increased the demand for humanitarian assistance, leaving the global community to grapple with the growing need for aid and relief in the face of limited resources and reduced funding. Yet despite these overwhelming challenges, the steadfast support of the Catholic community in Australia has allowed us to respond and to be where we are needed most.

This year marks our 60th anniversary, a milestone that would have been impossible without the generosity of our parishes, schools, and supporters. From the very beginning, our mission has been to bring hope, build strength, and provide critical support to those we serve. Your compassion and commitment are the foundations that make this possible.

Our Gospel mission calls us to care for our brothers and sisters, especially in times of conflict and crisis. Stewardship lies at the heart of our work, for it allows us to embrace our calling to be beacons of hope, compassion, and resilience for communities facing dire need in places like Gaza, Ukraine, and those affected by the looming threat of climate change.

The Caritas Australia Board remains deeply committed to this mission. We are animated by the enduring legacy of supporting marginalised communities and motivated by the values that drive our organisation. The support and encouragement we receive from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, as well as the remarkable leadership of the clergy, religious, and lay leaders across Australia, continues to be invaluable.

This year, we are called to care for our common home and human family. Stewardship demands that we care for creation, support those in need, and use our blessings to serve others, fostering a spirit of generosity and responsibility. By managing our resources wisely and acting with compassion, we reflect the love of Christ and ensure that the gifts we've been given multiply for the benefit of all.

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4:10).

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of our partners and express heartfelt gratitude to our supporters. Your unwavering dedication enables us to fulfil our mission and make a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve.

Finally, I would like to thank and acknowledge the former CEO Kirsty Robertson for her dedication to Caritas Australia over the past five years. She guided the organisation through many emerging and escalating challenges globally, advancing the mission of Caritas Australia. I extend my deepest thanks to our Interim Chief Executive Officer, Kirsten Sayers, the leadership team, and every member of staff at Caritas Australia. Your commitment to upholding our values and striving for a more just and compassionate world is deeply appreciated.

Robert Fitzgerald, AM

Chair

From our CEO



In August 2024, I took leave from my role as a Caritas Australia Board Director to take on the position of Interim Chief Executive Officer. I am incredibly honoured to serve this organisation in this capacity, and I have been deeply impressed by the dedication of the Caritas Australia team, our partners and our community of supporters.

For more than six decades, Caritas Australia has worked alongside our partners to deliver support and meet the most urgent needs of the people we serve. The support of our community and that of the Caritas network has been essential in navigating the ongoing challenges and changes that our world is facing.

This year, we are guided by the value of Stewardship. It comes at a crucial time for both our world and our organisation as it highlights that the work we do, both in Australia and internationally, is only made possible through our wholehearted commitment to those we serve. Dedication, integrity, and transparency lie at the very heart of our mission.

Whether addressing poverty, hunger, or disaster, Caritas Australia stands alongside communities, fostering lasting change through partnership and solidarity. This includes the work we do with our partners in the Australian community, bishops, dioceses, parishes, our coalitions and institutional funders, as well as our international partners, such as the Caritas Internationalis network and our Pacific partners.

As global crises loom large, so does our collective dedication and hard work. In 2023-24, we continued to strengthen our mission and work hand-in-hand with our partners across the world - from the alarming rise in hunger across Africa, conflict and displacement in Sudan, crisis in Lebanon to the sudden escalation and horrific consequences of the Gaza war. Through our humanitarian aid and development work, we also helped to support poverty alleviation, disaster preparedness, food security, women's development and climate finance and adaptation.

This year, we furthered our commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as well as Reconciliation, revamping our committees on these issues and working on projects and activities that strengthened our policies and mission.

With stewardship guiding our work, it is crucial that we continuously seek improvement. We are committed to ensuring that Caritas Australia remains robust and aligned with our mission.

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude towards Caritas Australia's community – our Board, our leadership team and staff – both in Australia and overseas, our supporters in every school and parish, and our partners. Your relentless efforts in helping create a brighter tomorrow for those we serve, your solidarity and your unwavering generosity have been pivotal in making these achievements possible. I would also like to extend my thanks to the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference and Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service for their support and guidance.

On behalf of everyone at Caritas Australia, I thank you once again for your support and assure you of our commitment to be good stewards and care for vulnerable communities in need.

Kirsten Sayers

Interim Chief Executive Officer

From our Mission Facilitator



I had a teacher at school who would praise his students with the line 'well done, good and faithful servant.' He even wrote the sentence on the end-of-year reports of children who had done especially well. I liked the high-sounding nature of those words. Little did I realise that they come from one of the parts in Scripture that helps us understand the meaning of stewardship, the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25. The story reminds us that the best steward is a faithful servant.

Stewardship is one of our core values at Caritas Australia. It influences much of what we do. We are stewards of creation, stewards of tradition, stewards of the grace that has been given to us, stewards of our personal sacred stories, stewards of the fragility of the people we are called to serve at the margins of society and stewards of the resources you entrust to us.

Stewardship is closely linked to trust, one of the most endangered lifeforms on Earth. After I spoke at Mass one Sunday, a woman approached me with \$5. She was a single mother, and her child had special needs. We spoke for a while and she mentioned that her daily treat, in a demanding life, was a coffee from the machine at her local service station, which in those days cost \$1. It got her going in the morning. But for one week she was going to give that money to us. I remind myself that if people make such sacrifices to help our work, the least we can do is use that money as fruitfully as possible.

Caritas Australia loves the stories we hear about how far people go to walk with us in service of the poor. In the past year, a school with 35 students organised an Easter parade in their small town to raise money. A large secondary school, also in regional Australia, required every student in Year 9 to make something. They then held a Trade Day, and all the money was sent to help Caritas Australia. Another school organised a photo booth, complete with a dress up box, so students could donate money and in return receive an oddball photo of themselves. At one school, students donated money so they could try to dunk their teachers into cold water. The poor teachers were good sports!

Stewardship calls us to honour and celebrate all this creativity and energy. The least we can do is to use the money raised as wisely as possible, with gratitude for the wonderful community all over the country that is the heart and soul of Caritas Australia. We are accountable, of course, to those of least account. We are accountable to the Lord who is so generous to us.

Peace and blessings!

Michael McGirr

Mission Facilitator

Our Values



Amey's school in Cambodia built a water station that helped students access clean water, even during the dry season. Photo: Caritas Australia



PARTNERSHIP

Caritas Australia is an agent of joy. We are a wonderful network of relationships between people, all of whom have their own story and their own understanding of life's mystery. We try to be as open as Jesus was, especially to the possibilities for those who long for healing. We exist to contribute to that healing, to celebrate the capability of those we encounter. We are servants, not judges. We try to respond to real needs, not the needs we imagine. We do not create co-dependents. Caritas Australia does not want to live in a divided world. We want to walk with the people who welcome us into their lives and communities.



COURAGE

Caritas Australia stands at the foot of the cross. We make bold decisions in faith. We ask difficult questions about the nature of society and its underlying assumptions. We sometimes act in the face of complacency and criticism. We stand alongside people who are pushed out of other conversations. We are engaged in a vigorous arm-wrestle with the complacency of a culture that is often indifferent to suffering beyond our borders. Above all, we work for justice for all people.



COMPASSION

Caritas Australia understands that compassion involves our whole being: our heart, hands, and head. Our emotional response to poverty moves us to think deeply with our partners about the most constructive response to them. This leads to committed and active relationships. In turn, this leads us back to a heartfelt response and the circle of transformation continues. Compassion is not a transitory experience. St Ignatius of Loyola spoke of *discreta caritas*, which means discerning love. Discerning caritas. We hope that our compassion is the source of wisdom and fidelity. Guided by the Spirit, we work for the long haul, for the liberation of all creation.



STEWARDSHIP

Caritas Australia has a profound commitment to care for the earth and stewardship for creation. We also have a deep sense of gratitude for the resources entrusted to us by our supporters. There are many who give from their hearts, people who make sacrifices so they can help the people we serve together. Their stories are a constant inspiration. We honour them through our dedication, probity, and transparency. We honour them by making decisions based on substance. We honour the earth, our common home, through the sensitivity of our homemaking.

Our Impact

Through partnerships with local organisations and Church networks, and as a member of Caritas Internationalis, the second-largest humanitarian network in the world, we are able to reach where the need is greatest and work together for a just future.

In 2023-24, Caritas Australia supported:

- **1,097,941** direct participants and **1,804,915** indirect participants
- **57** long-term development programs and projects
- **30** humanitarian and emergency responses across **36** countries
- **74** local partners to implement programs including:
Water and Sanitation, Women's Protection, Sustainable Farming, Disaster Risk Reduction, Literacy Training, Business Development, Food Security, Disability Inclusion, and Emergency Relief.
- **81%** projects addressing gender equality
- **65%** projects addressing disability inclusion
- **41%** projects addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation

Africa

Working with our partners in Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Togo and Zimbabwe across **15** development programs, we supported **553,995** direct and indirect participants across the region.

Pacific

Working with our partners in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Samoa and Tonga across **7** development programs, we supported **107,193** direct and indirect participants across the region.

Asia

Working with our partners in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Timor-Leste, Thailand and Vietnam across **28** development programs, we supported **1,027,716** direct and indirect participants across the region.

Australia

Working with our partners across **6** programs, we supported **401,530** direct and indirect participants across Australia.

Development Programs

 **514,014**
direct participants


 **1,174,890**
indirect participants


 **31%**
children/
youth
participants


 **93%**
local
partners

 **51%**
female
participants


 **59**
partners

 **23**
countries

 **44,631**
women participated in **15** projects
across Africa

 **41,746**
direct participants in Australia

 **5,660**
participants living with a disability
across **28** projects in Asia

 **6,492**
children and youth supported
across **7** projects in the Pacific

Humanitarian Emergencies

 Caritas
AUSTRALIA

542,181

people directly reached through
Caritas Australia funding

 Caritas
AUSTRALIA


1,547,748

people reached through
emergency appeals supported
by Caritas Australia

 church
agencies
network

11,021

people reached by the Church
Agencies Network Disaster
Operations (CAN DO)

 **30**
emergency responses

 **24**
countries

 **17**
emergency
response partners

Find out more at www.caritas.org.au/about/where-we-work/

Our Goal

All people, especially women, are supported to lead their development and thrive.



Angeline's vegetable garden has flourished after she participated in conservation agriculture training. Photo: Caritas Gokwe.

Our Impact

14,371
women supported to
assume leadership roles

2,430
services such as
counselling provided to
women and girl survivors
of violence

64,281
people participated in
sessions on gender issues
and women's rights

ANGELINE'S STORY

Farming families adopt skills to boost their food security

Zimbabwe was once known as the 'breadbasket of Africa,' but the country today grapples with hyperinflation, widespread poverty, persistent food shortages, and chronic malnutrition.

Angeline lives with her husband and three children in the Gokwe region in rural Zimbabwe. Life was not easy for Angeline and her family, who work as farmers. They often experienced food insecurity and they had to walk nearly four kilometres to fetch water from an open well. Her family was prone to waterborne diseases since they had to share water with wild animals.

"We had no knowledge of productive farming techniques such as conservation agriculture and so we were food insecure as a village," Angeline said. **"We had no gardens. As a result, we would exchange green vegetables with maize, but maize was not easily available as well."**

This all changed when Angeline took part in the Zimbabwe Integrated Community Development program, supported by Caritas Gokwe and delivered in partnership with the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). The program targets vulnerable households to enhance their capacity to tackle food insecurity and help improve the diversity of their food and improve their income. The project particularly targets women and girls to ensure they can access clean and safe water.

Through the program, Angeline attended an Asset Based Community

Development (ABCD) workshop that helped her and her community members to identify their existing strengths and resources.

"The workshop enlightened me, and I realised I was not as poor as I thought I was," Angeline said.

"I realised my potential to lead in my own development. I realised that, with the correct pivoting and support, our village could lead in its own development."

"My life has changed a lot since joining the program. To begin with, I participated in the Conservation Agriculture training in the very first year and after receiving my maize seed package, my family realised a very good maize harvest from a very small piece of land."


Since adopting the farming techniques acquired from the training, Angeline's yields have flourished. She can grow a variety of vegetables including green pepper and carrots so that her children can enjoy a healthier and more balanced diet. She can sell excess vegetable produce to earn an income and use that money to pay for her two children's school fees.

The project also drilled and solarised a water point in Angeline's village area and they now have tap water only 300 metres from their home.

"What is most important to me about the project is that it is not a welfare project. Instead, it unlocked our potential and we are participants in our development and not passive recipients," Angeline said.

PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS



 **830** people participated in conservation agriculture training

 Improved access to clean water, sanitation and infrastructure for **7,700** people

 **550** people participated in preventive and awareness raising activities related to child protection

Our Goal

All people, especially the most marginalised, experience wellbeing and live in safe, just societies.



A new water tank was installed in Leaia's home in Samoa, improving her family's access to clean water. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Our Impact

84,091
people gained improved access to drinking water

38,123
people gained improved sanitation facilities

106,812
people gained improved access to health services

LEAIA'S STORY

Delivering clean water to Leaia and her family in Samoa

Leaia lives on the island of Upolu in Samoa with her five children, her husband, brother, and sister-in-law. Their home is built from recycled scraps and was not connected to a piped water system, leaving her family reliant solely on rainwater collected in old fridges. When their water ran out, Leaia had to walk with her young children to collect water in buckets and containers from a neighbour down the street.

In rural areas of Samoa, poverty rates are strongly linked to lower levels of education, which was certainly true for Leaia's family, especially given the school water supply was also unclear. **"If there isn't enough water the kids can't go to school because the water supply at school isn't clean... Part of their morning routine is to shower before school, so if there's not enough water, they can't attend school. It becomes unhygienic for them,"** Leaia said.

With the support of Caritas Australia's local partner, Caritas Samoa, a water tank was installed at Leaia's home to harvest rainwater, giving her family a consistent supply, and improving their health and living conditions.

The time that was previously used to collect drinking water can now be used for other essential tasks and, most importantly, her children do not have to miss school.

In August, Caritas Australia staff followed up one year on from first visiting Leaia. She and her family were thrilled to share that a piped toilet, septic tank and shower had since been built on their property



The old fridges Leaia's family had been using to collect rainwater. Photo: Caritas Australia.

with the support of Caritas Samoa. A second water tank now helps maintain running water to these facilities. Prior to this, Leaia and her large family all relied on a pit latrine, which compromised their sanitation and increased their risk of disease. Furthermore, pit latrines across Samoa can be a risk factor for contaminated groundwater, leading to poor sanitation for communities.

With the help of Caritas Australia supporters, Caritas Samoa has been able to continue providing Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities and training across the country. Caritas Samoa is installing water tanks in crucial areas of communities, such as schools and family homes, to prevent children from missing out on education because of waterborne diseases, dehydration, and school closures due to drought.


"Thank you, Australia, for this great program, which has blessed and helped my family a lot," Leaia said.

PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS



 **1,606** people with household access to improved drinking water.

 **1,600** people with household access to improved handwashing facilities.

 **90** people with household access to improved sanitation facilities.

Our Goal

A common home where all people are resilient and achieve sustainable livelihoods and ecological justice.



Monoranjon's village in Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Our Impact

47,220
people gained improved access to sufficient food

25,800
people adopted improved agricultural and fisheries practices

10,108
people started or expanded a small business

MONORANJON'S STORY

Helping communities adapt to climate change impacts in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a country facing pressures on multiple fronts. The economic growth of recent years is projected to slow down in the face of political upheaval that has resulted in the collapse of the government. The country is also ranked sixth in the world of countries most affected by climate change (UN, 2017). 37.9 per cent of Bangladesh's population relies entirely on agriculture for survival (World Bank, 2024), but with climate change causing heatwaves, water shortages, increased crop salinity, storms and tidal surges, many families are becoming trapped in the cycle of poverty.

Caritas Australia, through local partner, Caritas Bangladesh, helps farmers learn climate resilient farming methods to combat the depletion of crop yields, and the sharing of those skills with other local community members. Delivered in partnership with the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), the Community Managed Sustainable Livelihoods and Resilience Program helps communities protect their futures.

As a result of sea level rising and the subsequent increasing salinity of soil, families like Monoranjon's are facing severe water shortages, and the need to supplement or replace their crop-based incomes. More frequent and severe storms often result in widespread flooding, destroying homes and livelihoods. Without enough income from his crops and fishing, Monoranjon was at risk of being unable to afford to send his children to school, which puts them at high risk of being trapped in a cycle of poverty.


Through peer learning sessions, Monoranjon gained invaluable knowledge and skills in climate-resilient organic vegetable cultivation, poultry and livestock rearing, livestock vaccination, fish polyculture, and crab fattening. He gained knowledge in salt-tolerant vegetable farming, acquiring skills such as mulching, composting, advancing his own organic fertiliser and pesticide production and use.

"Getting this training from Caritas, I am very happy," Monoranjon said. *"In my personal training and with the help of them I have learned a lot. I understand about climate and how to keep our livestock well, and how we live in our area."*

Monoranjon also participates in mangrove growing community groups with a focus on the role of mangroves in response to the climate emergency. Home to the world's largest mangrove forest, The Sundarbans, which defend Bangladesh's southern coastline from erosion, tidal surges and cyclonic damage, the increase in salinity threatens to collapse one of the region's most powerful safety nets against the effects of climate change. Monoranjon works with his community to plant mangrove seedlings on the mudflat coastlines across the delta he lives on, to prevent the further erosion, flooding and sea level rise of their lands.

Looking ahead, Monoranjon envisions a future where he continues to thrive as an experienced and progressive farmer and hopes that the difficulties he has faced won't lead to a cycle of poverty for his children.

PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

 Over **5,000** farmers participated in a vaccination program, with over 23,000 livestock vaccinated against disease.

 **87** young people participated in vocational training.

 **55** families received on-farm support for farmers living with a disability.

Our Goal

Communities affected by conflict and disasters can meet their immediate needs, and recover and build back stronger from crises.



Roland with his family outside their home in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Photo: Arlette Bashizi/Caritas Australia.

Our Impact

544,444
people reached by emergency response activities

25,612
people participated in disaster risk reduction strategies or climate change plans

21,240
people reached with hygiene kits and WASH assistance long-term development programs

ROLAND'S STORY

Overcoming hardship through vocational training

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the most impoverished countries in the world, with almost three quarters of the population living on less than \$3.20 AUD a day. Decades of ongoing conflict have led the country to face the second-highest level of internal displacement in the whole of Africa – one of these displaced people was Roland.

A 26-year-old father of four, Roland and his family were forced to flee their hometown due to violent conflict. When his family arrived in their new village, they had nothing. Struggling to provide a single meal for his family each day, Roland had to take on jobs like digging latrines to survive.

In 2021, Roland was selected to participate in the Youth Capacity Strengthening program, funded by Caritas Australia in partnership with Caritas Développement Kongolo and the Australian Government, through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). The program empowers displaced people like Roland by providing vocational training to increase income opportunities. Roland chose carpentry as his trade, which empowered him to develop a stable income so he could support his family and build self-reliance.

Before joining the program, Roland's family lived in extreme poverty. He had no steady income or secure access to land. However, the vocational training he received in carpentry transformed his situation dramatically.

"This training is crucial for us because it reduces unemployment, helps us escape poverty, and gives us freedom," Roland explained.



Roland working on carpentry in his workshop in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Photo: Arlette Bashizi/Caritas Australia.

Within months, Roland mastered carpentry, which allowed him to earn a stable income by making and selling furniture such as chairs and school benches. This income enabled him to provide for his family's basic needs, including food, healthcare, and education for his children. His wife also began selling produce at the local market, adding to the household income.

"Since I started working after my training with Caritas, my life has changed. At home, we live in peace; we have enough food when we need it; my children go to school," Roland explained.

Beyond this, Roland has become a role model in his community. He mentors 15 young people in carpentry, helping them acquire skills that can keep them out of dangerous work in the local mining sector. While mentoring other community members, he is working to expand his workshop, increase his land for farming, and purchase extra equipment.

PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS



1,649 people gained improved access to sufficient food.

595 people adopted improved sustainable agriculture practices

676 people started or expanded a small business.

Our Response

TWO YEARS OF WAR IN UKRAINE

Humanitarian conditions have remained grave in Ukraine with more than 17.6 million people now in need of humanitarian assistance, including 6.5 million people displaced overseas and 3.7 million people displaced within Ukraine.

Homes, schools, vital infrastructure, and hospitals have continued to be damaged throughout the past year while local farmers struggle to cultivate their lands due to the heavy contamination of explosive remnants of war and the heavy presence of landmines. The east and south of Ukraine form the frontline of this conflict where millions are struggling with inadequate access to water, food, health, housing, protection, and other essential services and supplies. In the central and western regions of Ukraine, many internally displaced people are dependent on humanitarian aid as they seek to re-establish themselves in new communities.

Caritas Australia has been working with partners Caritas Ukraine, Caritas-Spes Ukraine and other Caritas agencies in neighbouring countries to provide urgent support to displaced people. The Caritas Ukraine network is supported by 448 parish hubs and more than 1,200 employees covering most regions of Ukraine and providing services in urban and rural areas.

Caritas Australia's partners in and around Ukraine have been able to assist 4.2 million people affected by the war through a joint emergency response:



More than **2 million** displaced people have received food and 380,000 have received clean water



Over **500,000** people have been able to access shelter



More than **100,000** people have accessed basic family medicines and **800,000** people received hygiene supplies



290,000 people accessed psychosocial support services, including vulnerable children



With the support of our partners Catholic Relief Services, over **10,000** Ukrainian refugees are now living in safe, dignified transitional accommodation in neighbouring Moldova.



The Caritas network has been responding to the humanitarian emergency in Gaza. Photo: Majdi Al Jeda.

RESPONDING TO THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN GAZA

The conflict in Gaza continues to have a devastating humanitarian impact, with bombardments destroying homes, hospitals and essential water and sanitation infrastructure. More than 1.9 million people (90 percent of the population) have been displaced with many needing immediate food, shelter, health, and psychosocial needs. 96 percent of the population (2.1 million people) are projected to face crisis levels of food insecurity.

Despite ongoing bombardments, displacement, loss and personal risk, Caritas Australia's partners have continued responding to the exceptional humanitarian challenges in Gaza. The Caritas confederation has been able to assist more than 860,000 people in Gaza, as well as thousands of others across the region.



Over **705,000** people supported with food parcels.



More than **170,000** people supported with multi-purpose cash assistance.



Over **85,000** people received bedding supplies.



More than **13,400** people assisted with hygiene supplies.



Over **1,000** children provided with psychosocial support.

DISPLACEMENT AND FAMINE IN SUDAN

More than 9 million people have been displaced in Sudan, following armed clashes that began in April 2023. Many have fled to neighbouring countries, but millions remain facing shortages of food, water, fuel, medicines and other vital supplies. Over 75 percent of people affected by the conflict are women and children.

The United Nations has called Sudan's situation the "largest displacement crisis in the world," with about 16 percent of the population being forced out of their homes. Resources that were already stretched thin have been pushed to the brink, leading to one of the most severe hunger crises in recent history.

Sudan has traditionally hosted refugees from neighbouring countries. Important aid work has been happening in refugee camps for many years with limited resources. The conflict has put pressure on these already scarce resources, resulting in many people facing a lack of water, sanitation, food, shelter and safety.

Caritas Australia supported partners CAFOD and NCA (Norwegian Church Aid) in Sudan to provide urgent aid and assistance to those forced from their homes, including essentials like access to clean water, food, sanitation, and shelter. Since the outbreak of violence, Caritas Australia's partners have distributed food at 17 gathering points for internally displaced people.

EMERGENCY ACTION ALLIANCE

Caritas Australia is proud to be a founding member of the Emergency Action Alliance. The Emergency Action Alliance is a collective of Australian-based aid organisations that uses its reach and resources to save lives around the world. Together, we raise more money, for greater impact.



People returning to South Sudan via boat as a result of the conflict in Sudan. Photo: Caritas Diocese of Malaka, South Sudan.

Our Partnerships



Delegates of the Southeast Asia Regional Climate Change Response Framework. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Nurturing and caring for those in need, together

Stewardship – our dedication, integrity and transparency – is a value that supports and enables our partnerships.

This year Caritas Australia worked with 74 partners in Australia and overseas, of which 62% were Catholic-affiliated organisations, including Caritas Internationalis Member Organisations. As part of these partnerships, Caritas Australia supported 16 organisational development projects, investing in partners' governance, systems, and people to create strong and sustainable local organisations.

Partnering at the community level

Caritas Australia also supported our partners to build connections with and strengthen other community-based organisations and local government structures through programs. Throughout the year, Caritas Australia funded programs and engaged and strengthened a further 4,289 local level community structures including:



What our partners told us

At Caritas Australia, we deeply appreciate the vital role each of our partners plays in delivering impactful programs around the world. To ensure we continue to improve our partnerships, Caritas Australia conducted a partner survey in November 2023 to study the level of engagement, satisfaction, and areas of improvement perceived by our diverse network of partners. We explored engagement quantity and quality; interaction quality and accompaniment as well capacity building support requirements to improve the overall impact of our work.

With the input of 61 partner representatives, the partner survey found that there was high overall satisfaction among partners, with a special appreciation for Caritas Australia's support during project design, as well as on gender equity, women's leadership, disability inclusion, and protection issues. Areas of improvement include making more decisions together and providing more support in areas such as climate change response and disaster recovery. Caritas Australia frames our approach to partnerships through our Catholic values of subsidiarity and solidarity.

Partnering to respond to the cry of the earth

Caritas agencies and partners in Southeast Asia joined a climate response workshop in Cambodia, organised by Caritas Australia. Attendees included Caritas Indonesia, Caritas Timor-Leste, Caritas Cambodia, Caritas Philippines, and other local partners in Cambodia.

Discussions were underpinned by exploration of theological approaches to integral ecology, guided by the encyclical, Laudato Si'. Attendees worked together, sharing knowledge and approaches across four areas. Firstly, by exploring action at an individual, community, and institutional level; secondly by looking at practical steps within the environmental ecosystem itself; thirdly by discussing how partnerships can drive change, and finally by investigating policy-led approaches.

Joseph Kodamanchaly, Asia Regional Advisor: Localisation and Strategic Partnerships at Caritas Australia, said of the event, **"attendees were able to learn from like-minded organisations, with a view to developing a unified plan to be orchestrated at a regional and national level. In doing so, we hope to leave no stone unturned and maximise impact through collective action."**



Hosts and speakers of the Southeast Asia Regional Climate Change Response Framework. Photo: Caritas Australia.

ANCP Highlights

With the support of the Australian Government, and through partnerships with local organisations and Church networks, Caritas Australia reaches where the need is greatest, but it is only with the support and collaboration of our partners.

Here is a snapshot of the impact that Caritas Australia delivered in partnership with the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

17 programs
13 countries

187,731 direct participants
750,995 indirect participants

54% of participants were women and girls
32% of participants were children and youth

938,726 people reached worldwide

Our Learning



Chiquito learnt agricultural skills as part of the Sustainable Livelihoods/Disaster Risk Reduction program in Timor-Leste. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Our Goal

Caritas Australia is a vibrant, impact-focused organisation, committed to ongoing learning

Launch of new Impact Framework

This year, Caritas Australia launched a new Impact Framework which was developed through significant consultation to help better define, measure and communicate the organisation's impact.

Importantly, a 'whole of agency' view of impact was adopted. This recognised that all modes of action help create the Change We Want to See in the World – including animating the Australian community, advocating for positive policy change, accompanying partners and adapting ways of working through learning and research.

The accompanying Learning Cycle nurtured a strong culture of reflection and learning, grounding decisions and actions in evidence and participatory analysis.

Evaluation insights from South-East Asia

During the 2023-24 period, four programs underwent external evaluations in South-East Asia – in Myanmar, Indonesia, Nepal and Timor-Leste. These evaluations contributed to a continuous commitment to understanding, improving, and enhancing the positive change we strive to catalyse.

Integrated community development

The evaluations emphasised the community-led nature of Caritas Australia's programs, achieving positive changes on food production, nutrition, household incomes, and children continuing their education through collective community engagement and empowerment, as well as individual engagement in training, livelihoods, and Disaster Risk

Reduction activities. The mid-term evaluation of the Integrated Village Development program in Indonesia noted the revitalisation of existing farmer groups promoted a positive group culture, making the adoption of new technology faster.

Supporting locally-led action

The evaluation of the Localisation Change Agent Project in Myanmar, led by KMSS, highlighted its contribution in enhancing localisation knowledge and coordination among 145 civil society organisations. Participants gained insights into key trends and opportunities, empowering them to drive locally-led action and develop context-specific strategies for humanitarian response. This initiative underscored a commitment to subsidiarity and transformative partnerships.

Climate Action meta review paves the way for future action

This year, Caritas Australia undertook a Climate Action meta review to assess the organisation's approach to climate action and provide recommendations moving forward. The review found that Caritas Australia has taken significant steps towards becoming a climate-orientated organisation. Climate action featured strongly across Caritas Australia's programs portfolio, while the review also highlighted a number of notable climate-related achievements over the years, including:

- Collaborating with the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference to support the rollout of Laudato Si' Action Plans across more than 3,000 schools and parishes across Australia
- Taking Caritas Australia's report on non-economic loss and damage to COP28
- Increasing the number of projects with a focus on climate action across our programs portfolio.

The review provided 23 recommendations across all aspects of Caritas Australia's work, most notable of which included opportunities to:

- Develop a flagship climate action program to bring together and elevate wide-ranging climate initiatives
- Continue to deepen connections and partnerships to explore locally-led solutions to climate change
- Continue to invest in strengthening staff and partners' capabilities in relation to climate action.

The findings of this review will inform the development of Our Climate Justice Roadmap that will guide Caritas Australia in deepening our impact in this area, and promoting just solutions in combatting the impacts of climate change.

Disability inclusion training

Caritas Australia engaged CBM Australia and CBM International Advisory Group for a series of training on disability equity, rights and inclusion. This was in response to recommended actions from the Gender Equity, Disability and Social Inclusion program meta review held in the previous year to strengthen disability inclusion in programs.

The training was attended by 23 Caritas Australia staff and 15 partners across 9 countries in Asia.

The workshops increased awareness and understanding, as well as enhanced the skills and confidence of Caritas Australia and partner staff on disability equity, rights, and inclusion principles, approaches and practices, enabling effective integration into all aspects of the program or project cycle.

The training facilitated learning exchange among partners and linked them with local disability actors and organisations. A number of partners also received tailored support to address specific disability inclusion challenges in their projects.



Sepoima, an 8-year-old girl living in Samoa, collects water from a tank in her home. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Your Support



St Patrick's Primary School in Guildford, NSW, used a water wall to raise funds for Project Compassion. Photo: St Patrick's Primary School.

Our Goal

Caritas Australia cultivates broad funding streams with a growing level of income.

This year, our incredibly generous supporters raised over **\$9.75 million** through **Project Compassion**.

Our **Champions for Change** who give to Caritas Australia monthly to support our key programs gave over **\$3.8 million**.

Our **Women for the World** campaign raised over **\$765,000**, while over **\$130,000** was raised through **Global Gifts**.

We received **\$2.85 million** in **Bequests** from incredibly generous lifetime supporters.

Over **\$2.86 million** was raised for **emergency responses** which included **\$1.12 million** for Caritas partners in the Holy Land.

Schools and parishes raise funds for Project Compassion 2024

Caritas Australia is deeply grateful for the support from schools, parishes and supporters across Project Compassion 2024. The unwavering dedication and generosity has made a significant impact for vulnerable communities worldwide.

Project Compassion launch events were held across major cities, including Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart and Perth. Local archbishops and bishops attended the launches with over **245 schools** nationwide, with thousands of school students in attendance, both virtually and in person.

1,724 schools participated in Project Compassion, raising **\$2,664,874**. This achievement reflected the incredible commitment of over 300,000 students who engaged in various fundraising and awareness activities. Leading the charge was St Francis De Sales College in Adelaide, raising a remarkable **\$21,783**. St Patrick's School in Guildford, NSW, creatively used a water wall to collect **\$2,045**, while St Joseph's Primary School in Schofields gathered over **\$12,600** through their 'Walk for Water'.

Throughout the campaign, Caritas Australia representatives visited over **350** Masses to speak about and promote Project Compassion.

Parishes across the country showed incredible support, with **1,205** parishes raising a truly inspiring total of **\$4,758,793**. These combined parish efforts underscore the power of community action in addressing global challenges.

Across the country, local communities embraced creative fundraising initiatives to support Caritas Australia. From community garage sales to themed charity events, these grassroots efforts have made a significant impact.

Community groups, local businesses, and volunteers played a crucial role in organising and supporting fundraising events. From local fairs to charity runs, these community-driven activities helped raise substantial amounts for various Caritas Australia campaigns.



Babita Pinto, Head of Programs at Caritas India, with Kirsty Robertson, former Caritas Australia CEO, at the Women for the World event in Sydney. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Caritas Australia hosts Caritas India in celebration of 10th Women for the World campaign

In November 2023, Caritas Australia hosted Babita Pinto, Head of Programs at Caritas India, at a gala dinner in Sydney celebrating 10 years of Caritas Australia's annual Women for the World campaign. This campaign supports vulnerable women by focusing on education, sustainable livelihoods, healthcare, and reducing infant mortality.

With comedian Jean Kitson as MC, speeches from Kirsty Robertson, former CEO of Caritas Australia, and Babita Pinto, the event highlighted the campaign's significant impact. Babita spoke about the challenges faced by women in the communities Caritas India serves, while Kirsty emphasised the campaign's mission, quoting St. Teresa of Calcutta: **"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples."** This reflects Women for the World's goal of empowering women to create lasting change in their communities.

Our People



The Caritas Australia team in Sydney celebrated Thank You Day, with staff calling supporters to thank them for their generosity. Photo: Caritas Australia.



The Caritas Australia team in Melbourne. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Our Goal

Caritas Australia attracts and retains motivated staff and volunteers and nurtures effective partnerships.

Our Impact

125 staff in **5** countries

Offices in:

Australia, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste

105 employees based in Australia, **18** international staff and **2** expatriates

Gender balance for Australia-based staff is **70% female** and **30% male**. International staff is **30% female** and **70% male**.

Over the past year, Caritas Australia's people have demonstrated extraordinary dedication and resilience, embodying the very essence of the organisation's mission. In a world where the challenges seem ever-growing, our people have risen to the occasion, proving that a steadfast commitment to our values can lead to profound and transformative impact.

Enhanced collaboration and efficiency

This year, we proudly launched our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee and Reconciliation Action Plan Committee. Focusing on these pivotal areas fostered a more inclusive and collaborative environment within the organisation.

The DEI Committee is dedicated to creating equitable opportunities and promoting diverse perspectives, while the Reconciliation Action Committee is committed to healing and strengthening relationships with First Australian communities and continuing the journey of reconciliation.

Emphasising values through reflective goals

Caritas Australia placed a strong emphasis on the core value of Partnership by engaging a series of workshops designed to explore and embody this value. Each employee set a personal goal to integrate the principle of partnership into their daily responsibilities and interactions.

Looking ahead, the focus will rotate annually to other core values, aligning each year's objectives with Caritas Australia's mission and fostering a values-driven culture.

Attracting and retaining talent

This year, we significantly enhanced our Employee Value Proposition to attract and retain exceptional talent while affirming our commitment to gender equality. A key element of this initiative was the introduction of gender-neutral paid parental leave, which ensured equal access for all employees and promoted shared responsibilities in parenthood. Additionally, leave offerings were expanded to include compassionate leave for "sorry business." These updates are part of a broader effort to create a supportive and inclusive environment where every individual feels valued and empowered.

Celebrating the work of volunteers

Caritas Australia acknowledges the support of many volunteers and would like to thank them all for the amazing and vital role they play in the organisation. The work of Caritas Australia would not be possible without their commitment.

Our Advocacy



A team of Pacific climate action leaders along with Caritas Australia Advocacy Associate Director Dr Damian Spruce met with the Australian Minister for Climate Change Chris Bowen ahead of COP28. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Calling for loss and damage to be addressed at COP28

Following a briefing with the Hon. Chris Bowen MP, Minister for Climate Change and Energy, in Canberra with young Pacific leaders, Caritas Australia launched its report into loss and damage from climate change at the Faith Pavilion at COP28 in Dubai on 12 December 2023. The report titled *Unheard, Uncharted: A holistic vision for addressing 'non-economic' loss and damage* was developed with Caritas Internationalis and other agencies across the global Caritas confederation including SCIAF and CRS. It provided a framework for addressing climate impacts outside of direct economic loss, including the cultural and spiritual losses that result from disconnection with land and nature, forced displacement and illness and death.

The establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund was welcomed across the world as a response to help the most vulnerable countries hit by climate change. What Caritas Australia has been hearing from its Pacific partners is that this needs to extend beyond direct impacts measured in economic terms to those wider effects identified in the new report. The report had a substantial influence at the conference, forming part of the negotiations and informing the Holy See delegation's engagement. It is being incorporated into ongoing discussions for the development of the Loss and Damage Fund.

Our Goal

Caritas Australia inspires all Australians, especially the Catholic community, to advocate and act.

Women's economic empowerment in Papua New Guinea

In November 2023 Caritas Australia released its report on women's economic empowerment in Papua New Guinea, *Creating Pathways for Change*. The report looked at the role of faith-based organisations and leaders who, with extensive local community networks, are shown to have a positive impact on the ability of women to make and act on informed economic decisions.

The report revealed that faith-based organisations and leaders are highly influential and trusted and highlighted the contribution of the faith community in shifting attitudes and social norms around gender through awareness and training initiatives, as well as local advocacy. This advocacy often begins with conversations that use biblical or theological interpretations of gender equality, which act as effective entry points to challenge harmful norms or views.

Safer World for All Campaign

Caritas Australia's former CEO Kirsty Robertson launched the policy report setting out the key asks and policy context for the Safer World for All campaign at Parliament House in Canberra on 18 March 2024. Safer World for All is a combined campaign run by peak aid body Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and Micah Australia, an alliance of faith-based development agencies, calling on the Australian Government to address international injustice and instability by increasing our aid budget. Caritas Australia led the campaign as a co-chair, organising briefings with ministers, shadow ministers and other parliamentarians, planning market and communications research and strategy and the writing of the policy report. The campaign works across all parties and will launch its next phase in the upcoming federal election.



Dr Damian Spruce, Associate Director of Advocacy at Caritas Australia with Rod Goodbun and Josie Lee from Oxfam Australia, and Matt Darvas, National Director of Micah Australia.

Our Community



Serena Dalton, Kat Lee and Jody Mummery from Grassroots Action Palmerston. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Now More Than Ever – Caritas Australia visits youth program in Palmerston

In the lead up to Reconciliation Week 2024, Caritas Australia visited Grassroots Action Palmerston (GAP), a First Australian program partner in the Northern Territory. The theme for Reconciliation Week was Now More Than Ever, a reminder that no matter what, the fight for justice and the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will – and must – continue.

Caritas Australia supports six local partners in Australia, and one of these is GAP who run the Grassroots Youth Engagement project (GYE). The project offers new opportunities to disengaged young Aboriginal people - aged from roughly 12 to 25 - by working collaboratively with local community members, businesses, and government to create positive outcomes in key areas that young people have identified as important to them. GYE also delivers justice by empowering young people affected by the legal system to reclaim a life worthy of their dignity.

The program responds to the significant challenges facing young First Nations people by being participant-led. Young people get connected to employment opportunities that help build their skills and confidence, and this is paired with activities and mentorship to strengthen connection to culture. The aim is to support a generation of culturally aligned, confident young people who can step into leadership roles in their communities.

All of this is supported by the enduring love of the GAP Aunties, and the creation of a home away from home, called Aunties Place - a residential property complete with a kitchen, living room, and sensory areas. Young people can go there to learn how to cook and get support in applying for jobs or securing a place to live.

When asked what works for the young people GAP serves, founder and CEO Serena Dalton said, **“Respect is on the top of the list, because they don’t get that often. Love because what kid doesn’t want to be loved and understood. Helping them find who they are in a world of chaos is essential.”**



Fernando Pires, Country Representative of Caritas Australia in Timor-Leste, with Sr Leone Wittmack, General Manager Mission and Culture at CatholicCare NT. Photo: CCNT.

CatholicCare NT visit to Caritas Australia’s Timor-Leste Protection Program

Caritas Australia in Timor-Leste hosted a visit by CatholicCare NT, along with four women’s shelters that are partners of the Caritas Australia Protection Program in Timor-Leste. This meeting was an opportunity for the organisations to share knowledge and expertise around running effective safe houses for those escaping gender-based violence.

In Timor-Leste 59 percent of girls and women between the ages of 15 to 49 have experienced gender-based violence. In the Northern Territory rates of domestic violence are the highest in Australia, with 61 domestic and family violence incidents per day, and Aboriginal women making up 89 percent of the victims.

CatholicCare NT has been operating in the Northern Territory for 30 years, delivering a broad range of clinical, case management and community development programs. Services focused on gender-based violence include a crime victims counselling service, a men’s behaviour change program, primary prevention program NO MORE, and safe houses.

Caritas Australia’s Protection Program in Timor-Leste includes shelters for women fleeing violence, practical support for survivors such as savings and loans and small businesses training, and training in gender-based violence prevention. This program is supported by Caritas Australia’s generous donors, as well as the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).



Children and parents from Port Augusta All Saints Parish plant shrubs as part of a revegetation project. Photo: Port Augusta All Saints Parish.

A new tool to empower Australian Catholics to live Laudato Si’

In September 2023, Caritas Australia launched a practical guide to support Catholic parishes, organisations, schools, individuals and households across Australia to develop their own Laudato Si’ Action Plan. The *Australian Guide to Laudato Si’ Action Planning* is a new offering as part of Caritas Australia’s Catholic Earthcare program and outlines a four-step cycle of self-assessment, reflection, planning and action that complements the global Laudato Si’ Action Platform.

The launch coincided with the Season of Creation, a worldwide, ecumenical movement that celebrates God’s gift of our common home every year. Caritas Australia believes that collective action is key to addressing today’s environmental challenges. Through the Australian Guide to Laudato Si’ Action Planning and with the support of the Catholic Earthcare community, everyone is invited to embrace Pope Francis’s call for ecological conversion and forge networks of mutual support.

“The Australian Bishops are pleased to endorse Caritas Australia’s leadership of our collective action towards ecological justice. Its long-running Catholic Earthcare program provides specialist support and hosts dedicated communities for Catholic individuals, households, schools, parishes and organisations throughout Australia. This means that Catholic Earthcare is well-placed to accompany us as we each join the worldwide Laudato Si’ Action Platform and develop and implement our various Laudato Si’ Action Plans.” – Bishop Vincent Long, Chair, Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service.

Our Year



A special morning tea was held in April to celebrate Caritas Australia's 60th anniversary. Photo: Zara King/Caritas Australia.

Celebrating 60 years of Caritas Australia

The word Caritas means love and compassion in Latin and these two powerful words have guided us for the past 60 years, as we have worked hand in hand with our partners to make a difference in the lives of those we serve.

Emerging in the early 1960s, Caritas Australia was born from the sheer determination of the Catholic community in Australia to address global hunger and poverty. The Catholic Overseas Relief Committee, as we were formerly known, was established in 1964. That same year, the initiative took shape as Catholic parishes in Adelaide launched their first Lenten appeal, now known as Project Compassion, to raise funds to support communities in the Tiwi Islands.

In April, a special morning tea was held to celebrate Caritas Australia's 60th anniversary. This event not only commemorated six decades of impactful work with vulnerable communities, but it was also an incredible opportunity to express gratitude to Caritas Australia's community of supporters. Their unwavering compassion and generosity over the years have been instrumental in helping create lasting change across the world.

In the words of one long-time Caritas Australia supporter:

"In our turbulent world, it is very reassuring to know that Caritas Australia is holding the light and hope for us all and is encouraging us all to do the same."



New roof delivers healthy impact in Lemakot, Papua New Guinea

In April 2024 Caritas Australia visited the Lemakot Health Centre in the New Ireland Province of Papua New Guinea.

The centre at Lemakot was first established as an aid post in 1912 and has a long history of delivering healthcare to people in the New Ireland province. By the 1970s, under the stewardship of the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, it became the Sacred Heart Health Centre.

While visiting, the team learnt the last maintenance work, beyond a little painting here and there, took place in 1987. That was, until this year, when funding from Caritas Australia supported Catholic Church Health Services (CCHS) to replace the roof. While there, the team heard just how challenging it is for rural health centres to address work of this magnitude. Over 90 percent of people in Papua New Guinea live in rural areas and utilise local health centres like the one in Lemakot, but the government largely funds health centres in urban and more regional areas. What's more, the cost of supplies in Papua New Guinea is high, with record inflation reducing purchasing power for everybody, but especially those on low incomes in rural areas.

All this meant the work was seriously overdue with a rusty roof, full of holes, creating a serious impediment to healthcare delivery. Some of its impacts were obvious – rainwater leaking into treatment rooms and equipment storage areas is evidently a hygiene concern. Nurses having to manage buckets of water and fight to keep areas dry for patients was also a clear source of frustration, and a poor use of their specialist skills.

However, the condition of that roof was also delaying other fundamental improvements to the health centre. It had no running water because harnessing rainwater runoff from the roof to fill water tanks was not an option. Not only would the water have been rusty, but much of it would never have reached gutters for catchment, as it was leaking inside the buildings instead. Alongside this, without watertight buildings, a safe electricity supply was not possible.

When the Caritas team arrived, the roof was firmly on, sealing the building, which had also been newly repainted. Several water tanks were up and running, and the lights were on. People described how amazing it was to see the place lit up at night, saying it looks like a little city up on the hill. Before that, any treatment taking place after sundown would have to be lit with battery powered torches and lamps.

No wonder then that the Caritas Australia and CCHS teams were treated to the very best of Papua New Guinean hospitality, with a reopening event attended by the Governor's office, Bishop Roland Vunuvung, the full complement of Lemakot Health Centre staff, including Health Manager Father Justyn Amnino, and many locals. Local tribal leaders were also in attendance and performed a traditional welcome for all the guests of honour.

All guests addressed the crowd, with Caritas Australia and CCHS then being gifted taro, a pig, and local necklaces made from seashells. Members of the local community performed a dance to present the Matron of the health centre with the keys, ahead of the doors being re-opened and blessed by the bishop.

Reflections from Cox's Bazar: Resilience and hope

In March 2024, Caritas Australia Humanitarian Emergencies Associate Director Melville Fernandez visited the world's largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. He described this experience as a stark reminder of the urgent need for continued support and solidarity for the Rohingya refugees and the host communities who have generously welcomed them.

As someone who has dedicated over two decades to working in humanitarian response, I've had the privilege of witnessing the resilience of communities facing unimaginable hardships across the globe. Yet, my recent visit to the world's largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar has left an indelible mark on my heart, reaffirming the profound impact of compassion and solidarity in the face of adversity.

The living conditions within the camps are stark and challenging with nearly one million refugees living in Cox's Bazar, crammed into a mere 13 square kilometers. The makeshift dwellings are built out of bamboo and plastic sheets, so they are easily damaged or destroyed in extreme weather. Over the past year, there has been an increase in incidences of violence in the camps, including gender-based violence.

The threats of overcrowding, poor water and sanitation lead to an endless cycle of disease outbreaks, from scabies to dengue fever. Health centres and hospitals are operating beyond capacity, struggling to cope with the overwhelming demand for services.

Yet, amidst the tales of hardship and loss, there were also glimmers of hope. Organisations like Caritas Bangladesh are working tirelessly on the ground, providing lifesaving assistance and support to those in need.

From the woman who told me how the accessible latrine had changed her life for the better, to the protection centres where vulnerable women and girls are able to seek support and a sense of community, the presence of Caritas Bangladesh served as a beacon of hope amidst the darkness, offering a lifeline to those who had lost everything. As the world grapples with a myriad of crises, it is more important than ever to uphold our shared humanity and stand in solidarity with those who are most vulnerable.

Timor-Leste and Australia work together to combat climate change

In August 2023, Caritas Australia welcomed a delegation from Timor-Leste, comprised of church and government representatives, to the Sydney office. Also present were members of the Aboriginal Carbon Foundation and Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

The delegation was visiting Australia on a cross-cultural visit as part of the project called Transforming Rural Lives through Adaptation and Carbon Capture (TRACC). Supported by Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and WWF, and managed by Caritas Australia, the project aims to empower local communities to protect and rehabilitate forest ecosystems. Representatives from implementing partners, the Aboriginal Carbon Foundation and CRS, were joined by former Caritas Australia CEO Kirsty Roberston and staff.

In addressing the delegation, Kirsty Roberston said ***"It is through our fraternal cooperation that we, as brothers and sisters, journey together sharing our knowledge and learning from each other with our ultimate destination to serve the most vulnerable and our earth"***.

Our Diocesan Network

Caritas Australia's network of Diocesan Directors, committees and volunteers across the country is essential to help us communicate our work and mission deep within the Australian community. Mostly volunteers, they regularly engage with the local Diocesan parishes, schools, Catholic networks and the broader Australian community.

In 2023–24 our Diocesan Directors were:

National

Diocesan Director, Maronite Eparchy

Rev Fr Tony Sarkis

Diocesan Director, Ukrainian Eparchy of Australia
Fr Iurii Tychenok

South Australia

Diocesan Director, Adelaide
Tracey Tessitore

Diocesan Director, Port Pirie
Fr Ramel Morales

Tasmania

Diocesan Director, Hobart
Penny Edman

Victoria

Diocesan Director, Melbourne
Gwen Michener

Diocesan Director, Ballarat
Jillian Hogbin

Diocesan Director, Sale
Siji Dominic

Diocesan Director, Sandhurst
Fr Rom Hayes

Diocesan Coordinator, Sandhurst
Kerry Stone

New South Wales + ACT

Diocesan Director, Sydney
Dominic Smith

Diocesan Director, Armidale
Georgina Franklin

Diocesan Director, Bathurst
Rev Deacon Josh Clayton
Carmen Beard

Diocesan Director, Broken Bay
Vacant

Diocesan Director, Canberra-Goulburn
Vacant

Diocesan Director, Lismore
Deacon Graeme Davis

Diocesan Director, Maitland-Newcastle
Helene O'Neill

Diocesan Director, Parramatta
Sebastian Salaske-Lentern

Diocesan Director, Wagga Wagga
Clare Mitchell

Diocesan Director, Wilcannia-Forbes
Trish Cleal

Diocesan Director, Wollongong
Kerrie Hennessy

Western Australia

Diocesan Director, Perth
Rev Deacon Paul Reid

Diocesan Director, Broome
Aidan Mitchell

Diocesan Director, Bunbury
Peter Williams

Diocesan Director, Geraldton
Rosemary Taylor

Queensland

Diocesan Director, Brisbane
Andrew Knife

Diocesan Director, Cairns
Vacant

Diocesan Director, Rockhampton
Angela Wilczek

Diocesan Director, Toowoomba
Vacant

Diocesan Director, Townsville
Vacant

Northern Territory

Diocesan Director, Darwin
Sr Jessica Trieu FDCC



Melville Fernandez, Caritas Australia's Humanitarian Emergencies Associate Director, with the Caritas Bangladesh team in Cox's Bazar refugee camp. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Our Governance

Caritas Australia is governed as a company limited by guarantee under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) and its activities are overseen by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. Caritas Australia is a member of both the Australian Council for International Development and the Fundraising Institute of Australia and is therefore signatories to both Codes of Conduct. As a Member Organisation, Caritas Australia is guided by the Caritas Internationalis Management Standards.

As members of Caritas Australia, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference oversee the activities of the organisation in the areas of justice, ecology, international aid and development, and peace.

The Annual General Meeting was held on 6 December 2023.

Our Leadership Team

The Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring the organisation delivers on its vision of justice, dignity, and hope for humanity and all of God's creation. They are also responsible for creating a culture that aligns with Caritas Australia's values of Partnership, Courage, Stewardship and Compassion. The Leadership team honours these responsibilities by bringing considerable knowledge, experience and passion to the overall strategic direction of the organisation as well as its day-to-day operational management.



Kirsty Robertson

Chief Executive Officer
Appointed: 2019



Rocky Naickar

Chief Finance and Operation Officer
Appointed: 2013
End date: April 2024



Richard Landels

Advancement Director
Appointed: 2018



Michael McGirr

Mission Facilitator
Appointed: 2021



Alicia Benardos

People Director
Appointed: 2020



Dan Skehan

Programs Director
Appointed: 2021



Leigh Matthews

Impact Director
Appointed: 2022
End date: August 2023*

*Took on new non-leadership team role in August 2023



Sophie Jenkins

Impact Associate Director
Appointed: 2023

Up to date details on our leadership can be found here: www.caritas.org.au/about/what-is-caritas/our-leadership-team/

Our Board

Caritas Australia's Board is comprised of dedicated and experienced individuals who guide our strategic direction, oversee governance, monitor accountability and ensure that the organisation lives and achieves its Mission.



Robert Fitzgerald AM

Chair
Appointed: March 2020



Archbishop Mark Coleridge

Director
Appointed: November 2022



Virginia Bourke

Director
Appointed: March 2020



Dr. Martin Laverty

Director
Appointed: March 2020



Wendy Hughes

Director
Appointed: July 2020



Christine Grima

Director
Appointed: July 2020



Matthew Clarke

Director
Appointed: July 2023



Kirsten Sayers

Director
Appointed: July 2023



Gerald Stack

Director
Appointed: November 2023

Our Board Sub-Committees

The **Audit, Finance and Risk Sub-Committee** provides guidance to Caritas Australia's management related to independent external audit and financial standing and reporting. This includes the investment portfolio and the ongoing development of the agency's risk management framework.

- **Chair:** Wendy Hughes
- **Members:** Gerald Stack

The **Mission, People and Culture Sub-Committee** is responsible for providing guidance to Caritas Australia's management related to People and Culture, including staff engagement, recruitment, and retention strategies. This committee also assists with strategic oversight of mission integration initiatives.

- **Chair:** Virginia Bourke
- **Members:** Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Kate McCormack, Jarka Kluth

The **Programs and Impact Sub-Committee** provides guidance to Caritas Australia's management related to the design and implementation of our international aid and development

programs. This committee also provides oversight and strategic input to the delivery of our Impact Framework.

- **Chair:** Christine Grima
- **Members:** Kirsten Sayers, Mungreiphy Shimray

The **Nominations Sub-Committee** advises the Board in making decisions about its composition and its committees. This includes establishing and reviewing Board and Board committee succession plans.

- **Chair:** Dr. Martin Laverty
- **Members:** Archbishop Mark Coleridge

The **Innovative Finance Sub-Committee** provides guidance to Caritas Australia's management related to the scoping, feasibility, governance and implementation of innovative finance strategies and mechanisms. This includes ensuring alignment with our strategy and impact objectives.

- **Chair:** Christine Grima
- **Members:** Kirsten Sayers, Gerald Stack

Former Board Members during 23/24 Term

Jack de Groot
Director

Appointed: July 2020
Resigned: July 2023
Member: Programs and Impact Sub-Committee

Patricia Faulkner AO
Director

Appointed: July 2020
Resigned: September 2023
Member: Audit, Finance and Risk Sub-Committee
Chair: Nominations Sub-Committee

Learn more about our Board here: www.caritas.org.au/about/what-is-caritas/our-board/

Our Financials



Shaniella attended a Rural Training Centre in the Solomon Islands. Photo: Neil Nuia/Caritas Australia.

As reported in FY22 Caritas Australia embarked on a multi-year growth strategy which allowed for a planned reduction in our general reserves. During the current and previous two financial years this resulted in planned operating deficits. This planned additional expenditure was used to facilitate increasing our international development program expenditure, enhancing our domestic and international advocacy, whilst upgrading much needed fundraising and financial infrastructure. It was planned that the agency would be on a pathway to an operating break even during FY25 and FY26. In FY24, Caritas Australia incurred an additional \$2 million deficit over that which was planned, due to an unanticipated reduction in our forecasted income.

Caritas Australia has embarked on a rigorous plan to return to an operating breakeven over the next two financial years, whilst retaining healthy general reserves for future financial security and use as needed.

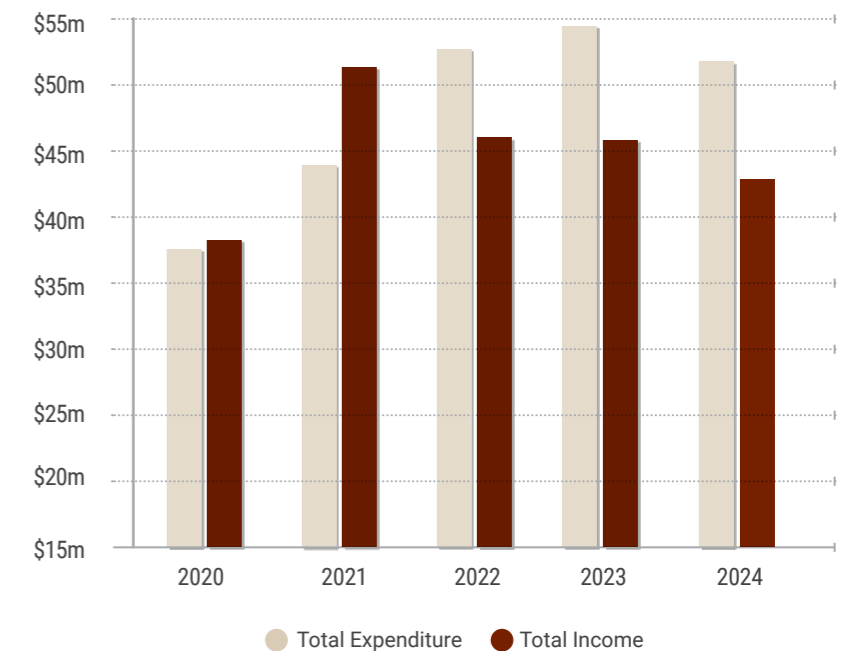
FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

The financial year ended with a total income of \$41.8 million and total expenditure of \$50 million, resulting in an \$8.2 million deficit, which was supported by the use of internal reserves.

The planned deficit spending is guided by our strategic commitment to increase our investment in our key operational and program priority areas and continue with our fundraising initiatives.

These investments are necessary for the organisation to develop diversified income sources and funding models to increase funding for our international programs, to strengthen our information and communications technology and data security ensuring the organisation's sustainability into the future.

Income vs Expenditure (\$'m)



Our Financials

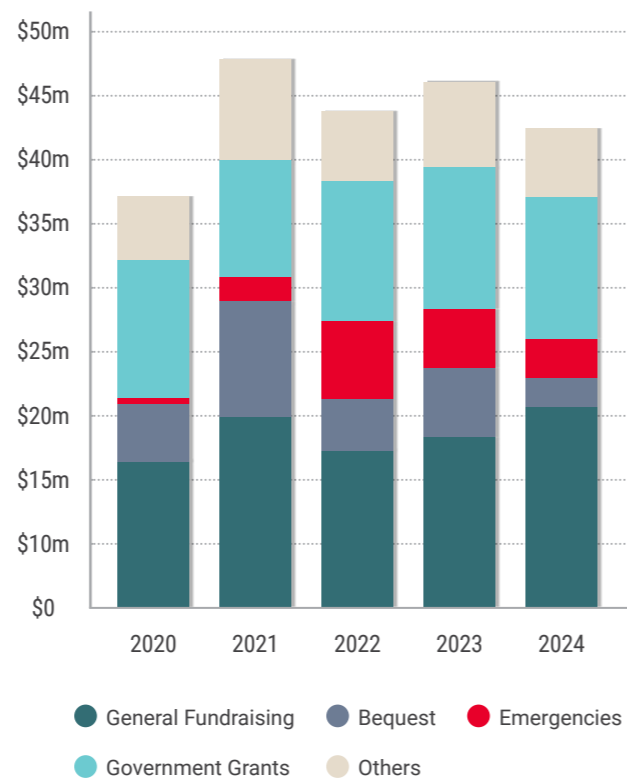


INCOME

Fundraising remains the primary contributor to our income, generating close to \$26 million. Despite challenging economic conditions, our general fundraising activities (excluding emergency appeals and bequests) grew by 7.4 percent compared to the prior year, as a result of the ongoing generosity of our donors.

This contributes to approximately 68 percent of our total organisational income, with recurrent and one-off government grants contributing close to 26 percent, and 6 percent from other income (bank interest and earnings from managed funds held with JB Were and Macquarie).

Income vs Stream (\$'m)



EXPENSES

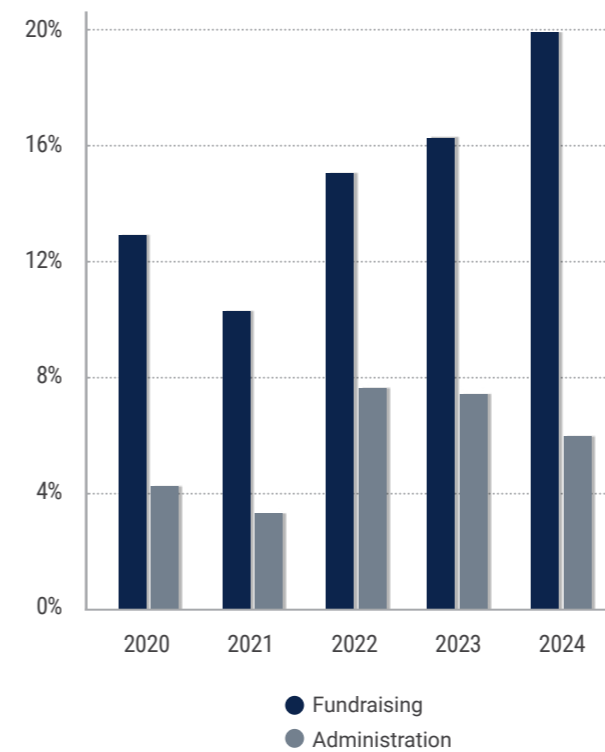
Caritas Australia is committed to ensuring operational decisions are supported by strong governance and prudent use of available resources. This is achieved by maintaining a reasonably low fundraising ratio of 19.7 percent (fundraising cost as % of total income) and administration ratio of 6 percent (admin costs as % of total income).

The increase in these ratios is a combination of the planned deficit to fund core operations from general reserves, and the temporary increase from investments in information and communications technology and fundraising initiatives.

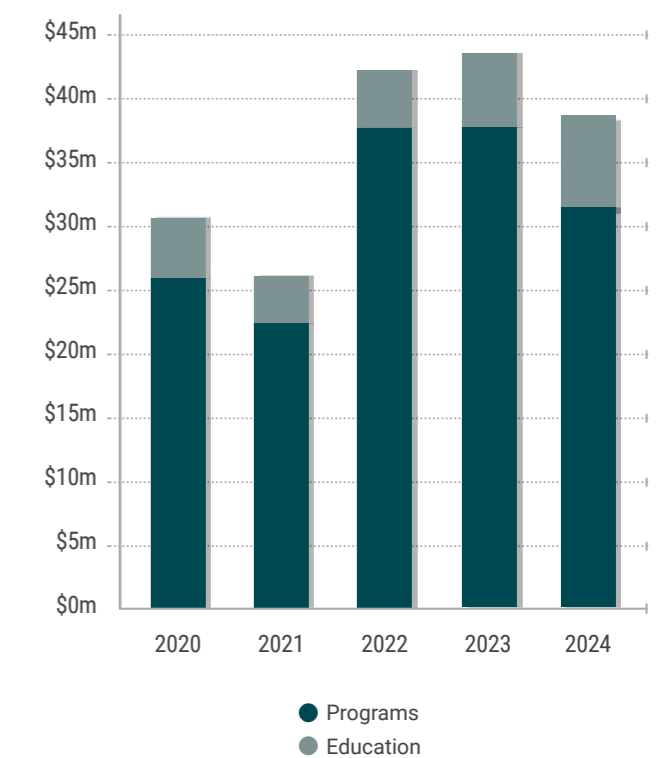
In 2023-24, investments from systems, cyber security, network protocols and cloud solutions have further strengthened our existing network security and remote working environment.

In alignment with the organisation's strategic direction, funding for our total program and education expenditures has increased in 2022 and 2023, with a planned decrease in 2024 while maintaining an average of over 90 percent of the total income, effectively utilising funds to maximise impact.

Administration/ Fundraising Ratio



Total Expenditure - Programs and Education



Caritas Australia is the lead agency of the Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations (CAN DO) and receives DFAT grants on behalf of the member organisations. In 2023-24, Caritas Australia received \$3.3 million in grants for the CAN DO Consortium.

Our Financials



Leaia carrying water back to her family home in Samoa. Photo: Caritas Australia.

PROGRAMS

In FY23-24, Caritas Australia allocated \$30 million to support both its international and First Australian programs, while also responding to emergencies and humanitarian crises.

Caritas Australia provides funding for programs across Asia, the Pacific, Africa, and in Australia with First Australian communities. Caritas Australia collaborated with local partners to implement programs including water and sanitation, women's protection, sustainable farming, disaster risk reduction, literacy training, business development, food security and disability inclusion. In FY23-24, some of our major investments included:

- \$1.5 million in climate action and environmental protection.
- \$1.7 million in protection including disability, human rights, promoting cultural identity, safeguarding and child protection.
- \$1.4 million in gender equity and women's protection.
- \$3.1 million in water, sanitation and health including basic health, hygiene and maternal and child health.
- \$4.5 million in food security and sustainable agriculture.
- \$1.6 million in disaster risk management, immediate relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation.
- \$3.9 million in economic development and education encompassing early childhood development, economic development, microfinance, advocacy, organisational capacity building and governance.

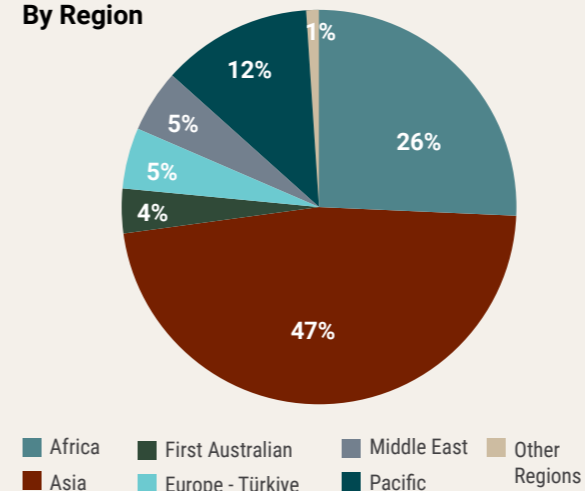
Caritas Australia is a world leader in emergency responses. We coordinate with the international Caritas network and our partners on the ground to bring emergency relief in the form of food, clean water, emergency shelter, hygiene kits and cash assistance. We leverage our resources and technical expertise to help communities receive long-term recovery and build resilience. We were able to contribute \$4.7 million towards humanitarian efforts including:

- \$1.3 million to support urgent need in Ukraine.
- \$500,000 to the Türkiye Syria earthquake response.
- \$804,000 to Africa region including \$100,000 to flood response in Samburu, \$100,000 to Rabat earthquake response, \$200,000 to Sudan displaced people, over \$300,000 to Ethiopia food crisis and drought response.

- \$1 million to Asia including \$265,000 to Bangladesh Rohingya Response, \$250,000 to access to education in Afghanistan, \$390,000 to COVID-19 recovery in Laos.
- \$1 million to Middle East including \$380,000 to earthquake response in Syria, \$250,000 to support individual and family resilience in Palestine and \$340,000 to Lebanon.

Of the \$30 million investment across development programs and emergency relief, \$9 million was funded through the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and its contractors.

Program Spend By Region



EQUITY: Accumulated funds or unrestricted reserve are funds which have no conditions attached and can be used at the discretion of Caritas Australia.

Unspent government grants and income from special appeals make the committed and specific expenditure reserve. The use of funds are restricted and can only be used for the purpose it was provided.

Managed funds are held with fund managers for longer term organisational sustainability and can be drawn upon to support core activities, if required.

Our full Financial Report 2023–24 is available to read at www.caritas.org.au/publications/annual-reports/

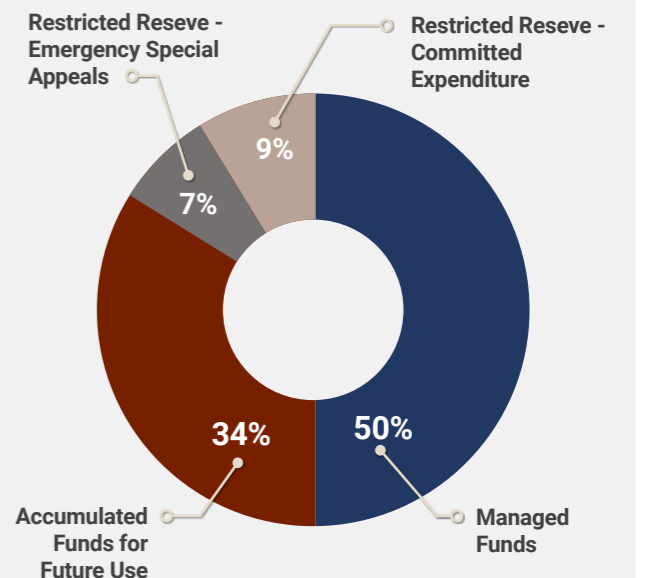
This report has been approved by resolution of the directors.

Humanitarian

Ukraine	\$1,301,314	28%
Türkiye	\$506,723	11%
Middle East	\$975,075	21%
Africa	\$804,766	17%
Asia	\$1,046,740	22%
Pacific and other regions	\$79,572	2%
Total	\$4,714,191	

Sector

Climate action and environmental protection	\$1,558,906	9%
Protection	\$1,779,388	10%
Gender equity	\$1,432,148	8%
Water, Sanitation and Health	\$3,070,280	17%
Food security	\$4,530,577	25%
Disaster, relief and reconstruction	\$1,598,381	9%
Economic development and education	\$3,979,595	22%
Total	\$17,949,276	



Your Compassion

Thank you for your
generosity and support

Corporate Partners

Aradyne No 2 Pty Ltd
Catholic Development Fund
Commonwealth Bank of
Australia
Connellan Industries Australia
Pty Ltd
Dunmarra Pty Ltd
Nature Play Solutions
Seasonal Supplies Pty Ltd
Vivienne Court Trading Pty Ltd

Generous Gifts in Wills

Dr Glen and Mrs Suzanne Coorey
Brian Robert Daly
Nora Geraldine De Beer
Margaret Ann Demee
William Richard James Finighan
Gerald Fitzpatrick
Helmut Gebauer
Theresa Julia Holles
Richard Francis Jukes
Denis Stanley Klein
Miriam Florence Martin
Patricia Irene McNally
Fr Kevin Melville Mogg
Fr Kevin O'Loughlin
Fr Desmond Panton
Vincent Thomas Pinzone
Kevin John Scanlon
Claire Schmitzer

Major Supporters

Robert Campagnaro and Cathy
Byrne
Denise Cartwright
Mike and Rosemary Gibbings
Fr John Hannon
Janet Healy
Fr Terry Kean
Bernie McIntosh
Joseph Moloney
Panizza Family
Lisa Tobin
Peter and Kate Tobin

Trusts and Foundations

Brother George Foundation
Darcy Brennan Foundation
Eusebius Trust
OLJ Australia
Skellern Family Foundation
Shepherds Trust
The Noel and Carmel O'Brien
Family Foundation
Three Springs Foundation
Vonbri Foundation
Wilkinson Foundation



Laxmi and her mother, Mankala, on their family farm in Nepal. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

Ways to Get Involved

Become a Champion for Change

Make a monthly donation by calling 1800 024 413 or visit www.caritas.org.au/monthly-giving

Host a fundraiser

Head to www.caritas.org.au/fundraise and start fundraising!

Register for Workplace Giving

One of the most cost effective and simple ways of donating. Visit www.caritas.org.au/workplace-giving

Leave a Gift in your Will

Include a bequest in your Will and together we can create sustainable change. Visit www.caritas.org.au/bequests

Purchase a Global Gift

Give a gift that keeps on giving, visit www.globalgifts.org.au

Volunteer


Want to help out? Call 1800 024 413 or go to www.caritas.org.au/volunteer-opportunities

Sign up to receive our news

e-news Hope in Action: www.caritas.org.au/HIA

Quarterly magazine Your Compassion in Action: www.caritas.org.au/magazine

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3-year-old Pepe lives on the island of Upolu in Samoa. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Our Accountability

DFAT

Caritas Australia is accredited by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), responsible for managing Australia's aid program. To maintain accreditation, Caritas Australia's systems, policies and processes are rigorously reviewed by the Australian Government. In 2023-24, we received support from the Australian government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program, the Australian Humanitarian Partnership, and the Church Partnership Program.

ACFID

Caritas Australia is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct, which is a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice. As a signatory we are committed and fully adhere to the ACFID Code of Conduct and ACFID Fundraising Charter, conducting our work with transparency, accountability and integrity. For more information on the Code, visit the ACFID website www.acfid.asn.au or email code@acfid.asn.au.

CODES AND STANDARDS

We uphold the highest standards of practice, as demonstrated by our commitment to the:

- ACFID Code of Conduct
- Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Standards
- Caritas Internationalis Management Standards
- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards
- Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, as part of Caritas Internationalis
- The Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS)
- Fundraising Institute of Australia Principles and Standards of Fundraising Practice
- Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles
- Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards
- We have also adopted and implemented the international standards of risk management, ISO 31000.

FUNDING

Caritas Australia generates income from various streams including the Australian Government, public donations, and investments. We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Australian Government.

CHARITY STATUS

Caritas Australia is endorsed by the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission as a Deductible Gift Recipient. Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

We welcome feedback about our organisation. To provide feedback or make a complaint, call 1800 024 413, write to Caritas Australia, GPO Box 9630 in your capital city or go to www.caritas.org.au/complaints/ to see other options, including how to make an anonymous complaint. Complaints alleging breaches of the ACFID Code of Conduct can also be made to the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee via www.acfid.asn.au/content/how-make-complaint.

PRIVACY POLICY

In line with the Privacy Act 1988 and the legislation changes in March 2014, Caritas Australia is committed to ensuring that we not only meet the legal requirements but also establish a culture of good practice regarding personal information about supporters. Read our full privacy policy at www.caritas.org.au/privacy/.

SOLICITORS

Makinson d'Apice Lawyers

BANK

Commonwealth Bank of Australia


AUDITORS


Pitcher Partners





**The Catholic Agency for
International Aid and Development**


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