

# Margret, Solomon Islands



Margret standing outside a classroom at the San Isidro Care Centre in the Solomon Islands. Photo credit: Neil Nua



[Watch Margret's story.](#)

**Margret teaches deaf students the practical skills needed to earn a living at a vocational school in the Solomon Islands. Margret was born deaf so she knows the challenges that deafness poses to education and employment.**

**The school had a shortage of water for half the year. Students and teachers had to walk off campus, twice every day, to collect water. In April 2020, Tropical Cyclone Harold struck amidst COVID-19, which damaged the school buildings and the vegetable garden.**

**With Caritas Australia's support, Margret's school was able to install water tanks, repair school property and help to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Now, the school is able to maintain its own water supply and is also boosting food security, by increasing its agricultural production, to build resilience in the face of future disasters.**

Margret, 39, says her early childhood, being deaf, was difficult, until she learnt sign language when she was seven years old. "Before, I faced discrimination, my needs felt neglected and I felt excluded from the community. Then I could communicate with my other deaf friends, it reduced my frustrations and made me feel more confident and happy."

As Margret grew older, she was keen to share her knowledge with others. Margret teaches at the San Isidro Care Centre, a live-in vocational school for deaf students. It is the only educational facility of its kind in Guadalcanal province, Solomon Islands. She teaches sign language and life skills, like sewing, cooking, nutrition and hygiene to teen and adult students, some who have never been to school before.

However sourcing water at the school was an ongoing challenge. The school's four small tanks always ran out of water quickly or remained empty during the dry season. Staff and students would have to walk for up to half an hour to collect the water they needed for drinking, cooking, washing and growing vegetables for their meals.

Although the Solomon Islands is a nation surrounded by water, it still experiences drought and water shortages. Around 40% of people in rural areas do not have access to basic drinking water\*, which can lead to the spread of communicable diseases like cholera and typhoid.

\* Source: [World Bank](#)

# WEEK 2: MARGRET, SOLOMON ISLANDS

In 2019, Caritas Australia supported the school by installing 8 water tanks and a rainwater harvesting system which allowed a year-long supply of drinking water. Students also gained carpentry, building and plumbing skills by helping to install the water tanks, tank stands and guttering.

Then, Tropical Cyclone Harold struck in April 2020, destroying the roof of a staff living quarters and damaging the school's vegetable garden, leading to food shortages, amidst the threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Caritas supported the school by providing cyclone-proof materials to repair the damaged staff house. It also helped the school to raise awareness about COVID-19 prevention measures, including how to install makeshift 'tippy taps' outside classrooms to ensure students washed their hands. It also provided fabric for students to make face masks to protect themselves, their family and community.

*"Water is always available now for drinking, washing, bathing, gardening," Margret says. "Unlike before, when we had to go 25 minutes away to collect water during the dry season. Water is so important for our life, also part of our music and culture."*

The San Isidro Care Centre, with 150 students, now has water available all year round which has improved sanitation and food security for many years to come. It has allowed the school to enrol more students and for all students to focus on their studies.

Through Margret's example, San Isidro students can look forward to a future of dignity and generosity. She hopes that the school community can also aspire to 'Be More', by working together to strengthen its food security.

With Caritas Australia's support, the school hopes to upscale poultry production, add livestock and diversify its vegetable garden, using drought-resilient seedlings. This will improve the nutrition of staff and students, as well as boosting the school's income. In the spirit of St Oscar Romero, 'We plant the seeds that one day will grow.'

"I am proud that our school community works together with Caritas Australia as our partner in ensuring that we live in a healthier environment," Margret says.

"Thank you very much, Caritas Australia. Thank you very much, Project Compassion."



Margret teaches sign language at the San Isidro Care Centre in the Solomon Islands. Photo credit: Neil Nuia

## 1. Read and discuss/write your responses:

- a) Identify the key challenges Margret's community is facing.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b) Explain how Caritas Australia and their partners in the Solomon Islands are empowering the community to overcome some of these challenges.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c) Explain how Tropical Cyclone Harold and COVID-19 have impacted Margret's community.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- d) What have been the impacts of Margret's participation in the Caritas Australia supported program?

- a) Human Dignity - We believe that every person is created in God's image and that all human life is sacred. We believe in the dignity of each person.

Clean water is a basic human right, how are basic rights important to the Catholic Social Teaching principle of human dignity?

## 2. Water Quiz

How much do you know about water in our world?

Take the [Water Quiz](#) to test your knowledge.

## 3. Water Audit

The San Isidro Care Centre only had four small water tanks which would run out quickly and remain dry for periods of time, forcing the staff and students to walk for up to half an hour to retrieve water.

Complete a [water audit](#) at your school to see how water is used, where water is being misused and how your school can be water-wise.

## 4. Learn how to sign! - Languages: [Auslan](#)

Auslan is the name of the Australian sign language.

Learn how to finger spell your name:

<http://www.auslan.org.au/spell/twohanded.html>

Use the Sign bank dictionary to create a sentence using Auslan: <http://www.auslan.org.au/dictionary/>

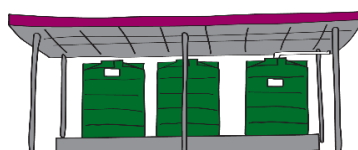
## 5. Problems/Solutions Tree

Complete the problems and solutions trees on the following pages, identifying the issues, causes and solutions Margret and her community face in the Solomon Islands.

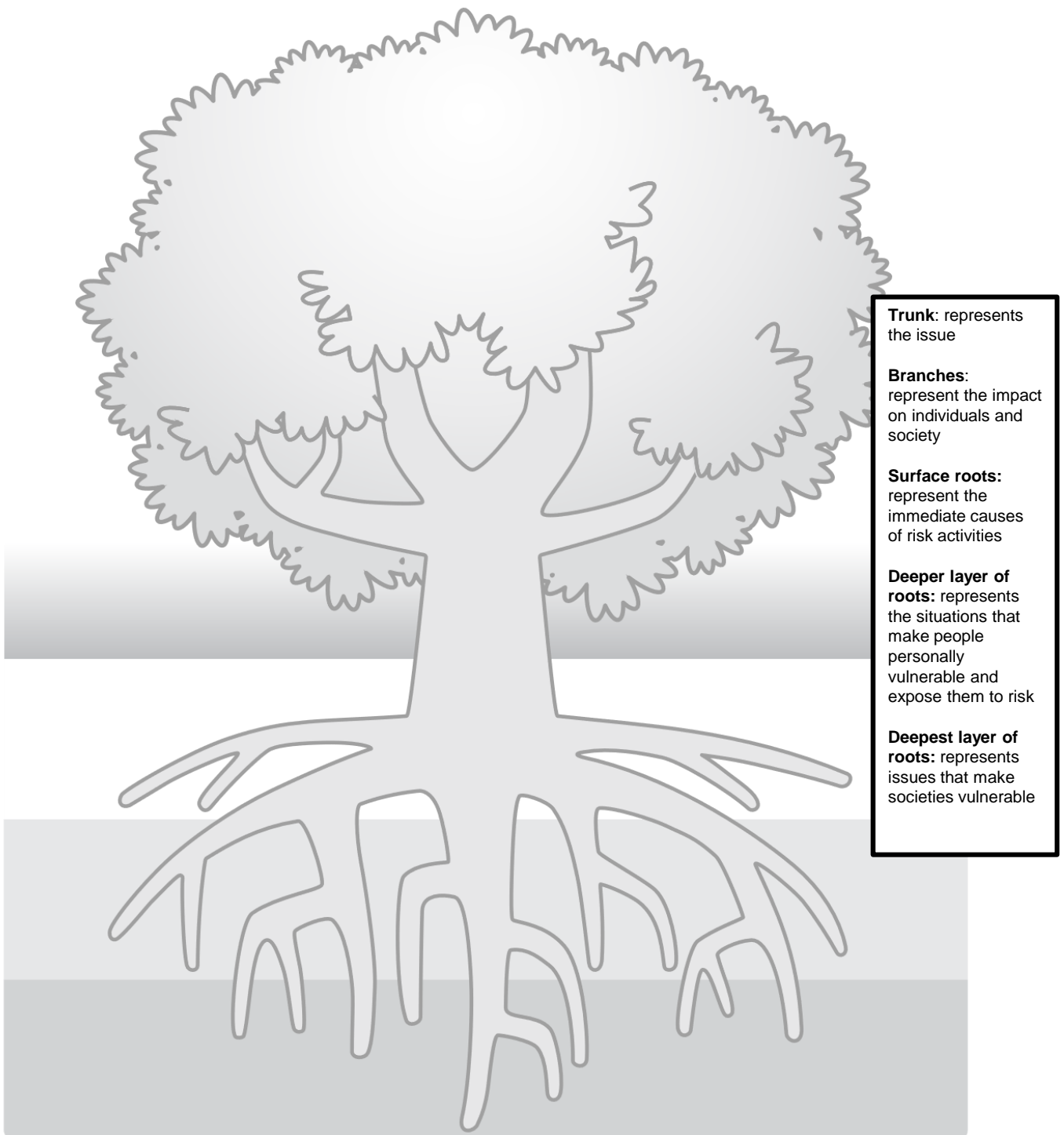
## 6. Tippy Taps

Washing your hands is vital in stopping the spread of bacteria and viruses such as that of COVID-19 which impacted upon Margret and her community.

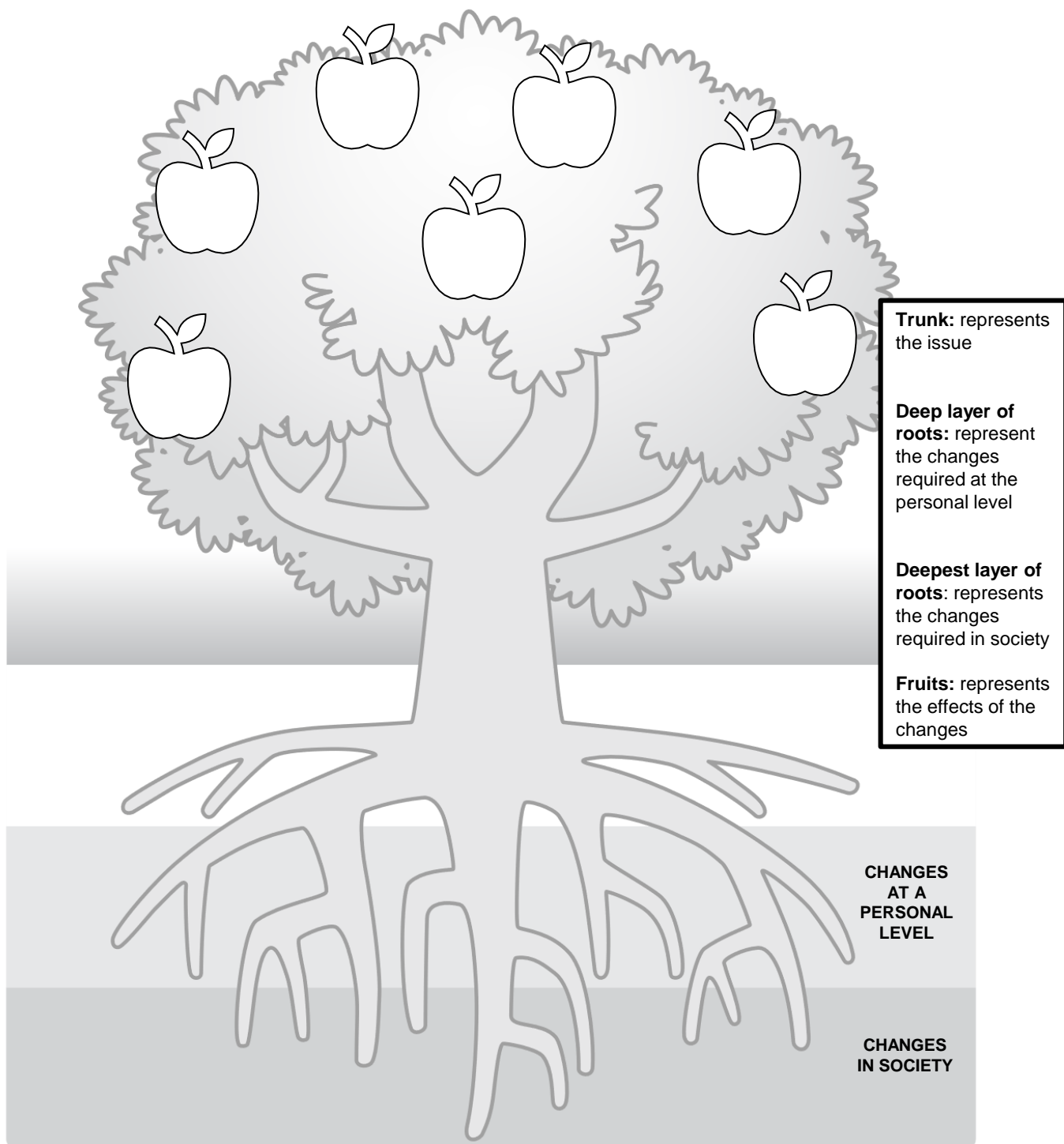
Use this [worksheet](#) to learn how others around the world build tippy-taps and then build your own!



## Problems Tree



## Solutions Tree



# COUNTRY STUDY: SOLOMON ISLANDS



Engage with the [Country Study Thinglink](#) and do some of your own research to find out the information below. Suggestions for reliable sources are included on the Thinglink and below.

<p>Predict life expectancy in Solomon Islands. Find out the correct answer. Does this surprise you? Why/Why not?</p> <p><a href="https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy">https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy</a></p>	Prediction:	<p><a href="https://www.britannica.com/place/Solomon-Islands">https://www.britannica.com/place/Solomon-Islands</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/solomon-islands/Pages/solomon-islands">https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/solomon-islands/Pages/solomon-islands</a></p>	
	Actual:	What are the official languages?	
		What is the main religion?	
<p>What is the population of Solomon Islands? What is the population of Australia?</p> <p><a href="https://ourworldindata.org/world-population-growth">https://ourworldindata.org/world-population-growth</a></p>	<p>Soloman Islands:</p> <p>Australia</p>	<p>What system of government does the Solomon Islands have?</p>	
<p>What is the poverty rate in the Solomon Islands?</p> <p><a href="https://data.worldbank.org/http://hdr.undp.org/en/data">https://data.worldbank.org/http://hdr.undp.org/en/data</a></p>		<p>In what region of the world is the Solomon Islands located?</p> <p>What direction is it from Australia?</p>	
<p>List three major factor/s affecting poverty and wellbeing (E.g. education)</p>		<p>Describe the ways Australia is connected to the Solomon Islands. (E.g. trade that occurs between the two nations, services that are exchanged, immigration, etc.)</p>	
<p>Summarise Caritas Australia's support to improve wellbeing.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>		<p>Select two relevant Sustainable Development Goals.</p> <p>Why did you select these?</p> <p><a href="http://www.globalgoals.org">www.globalgoals.org</a></p>	

*"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples."*

-St Teresa of Calcutta

## Reflection questions:

- How does this quotation relate to Margret's story?
- What does this quote reveal about the impact of our actions on the lives of others?
- Explain how can you use your gifts and talents to create ripples.



1. How might you raise awareness in response to what you have read and thought about in Margret's story?

**"Those who enjoy a surplus of water yet choose to conserve it for the sake of the greater human family have attained a moral stature that allows them to look beyond themselves and the group to which they belong. How marvelously human! The same attitude is demanded if we are to recognize the rights of all people, even those born beyond our own borders."**

**Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti #117**

2. Explain how you can avoid water wastage by changing the way you use water at home and at school. Create a social media post that promotes one of these ideas. Don't forget to include images, a caption and relevant hashtags.



## Pray

Write a prayer of intercession based on what you have learnt from Margret's story. You may want to share these as a class at an end of the week reflection, or on your online classroom platform.

Here is an example of one:

*Loving God, we pray for those who do not have access to safe drinking water. May we lift our voices and take action, working in solidarity with those communities to help them continuously access safe water. We pray to the Lord.*

