

CaritasNews

CHANGE STARTS WITH YOU

#172 | WINTER 2023

WINTER 2023 EDITION

FIRST AUSTRALIANS:

Learn about the work of Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation during Sorry Day, as well as Caritas Australia's support of the Voice.

FOOD SECURITY IN THE HORN OF AFRICA:

See how your support is helping vulnerable communities across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

CLEAN WATER IN CAMBODIA:

Read the stories of Salin, Seoun, and Em and Lat, and how your generosity has helped them gain access to clean and safe water.

UPDATE FROM THE PACIFIC REGION:

Learn about the achievements of the 3H Program, and how children in the Solomon Islands are singing their way to safety.

THANK YOU

The first half of the year is almost through, and we have already achieved so much together! So far, your generosity has helped us work hand-in-hand with our partners in Turkiye and Syria to assist those affected by the earthquake that struck earlier this year. You have supported communities in need across Africa and Ukraine, as they continue to face the horrors of political upheaval and food insecurity.

Your support also made Project Compassion 2023 an absolute success. This year, we brought you the stories of some incredibly resilient people from across the world - Laxmi from Nepal, Priscilla from Zimbabwe and Thu from Vietnam. Your generosity has made an enormous difference in their lives. So, from the bottom of my heart, I thank you for your kindness and your commitment to making the world a better place for all generations.

The production of this winter edition of Caritas News coincides with numerous First Australian observances, including National Sorry Day, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week. With your support, Caritas Australia works in close partnership with First Australian-led organisations to support programs that focus on intergenerational healing, strengthening cultural identity and spirituality, livelihood opportunities, and advocacy. Caritas News celebrates the work of our partner Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation, and all their achievements.

This edition features stories from the Horn of Africa, as its people continue to battle a devastating food crisis, and updates from the current situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It also showcases the impact that your generosity has had in helping communities in Cambodia access clean and safe water, and supporting disaster risk reduction activities in the Solomon Islands.

Your kindness and generosity are pivotal in making these stories possible. I once again thank you for your ongoing support and compassion, and hope that you enjoy this winter edition of Caritas News.



With gratitude,

Kirsty Robertson

Kirsty Robertson
Chief Executive Officer
Caritas Australia

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Photo: Caritas Australia Solomon Islands.
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FIRST AUSTRALIAN

STANDING HAND-IN-HAND WITH FIRST AUSTRALIANS

This National Sorry Day on 26 May, Caritas Australia's partner Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation (KBHAC) invited all Australians to reflect on Australia's true history and commit to truth-telling about Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants.

To commemorate Sorry Day, Caritas Australia and KBHAC joined forces to host a webinar to raise awareness and discuss the social and emotional impacts on survivors and their families.

Schools, parishes and supporters were invited to attend and hear about the work of KBHAC, as well as the survival stories of Uncle Roger (#12) and Uncle Bobby (#24).

'We were thrown in this big black car and taken down the peninsula. They stole my culture, my identity. Gone. When I went through them gates. They even took my name away. I became Number 12,' said Uncle Roger, as he remembered the painful and traumatic experience of being taken away from his mother and leaving his home.

'We didn't have that love from our mothers and fathers. That was taken away from us,' Uncle Bobby added.

Attendees also had the opportunity to hear from Caritas Australia's First Australians Associate Director, Christine Rhazi, and learn about the importance of healing our nation, and supporting Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants.

The Bringing Them Home report in 1997 acknowledged the pain and suffering experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the forced removal of their children from family, community,



culture and Country. Yet 26 years later, there has still been no systematic government response to the needs and rights of the Stolen Generations and their descendants.

During May, an event was also held by KBHAC and Caritas Australia to commemorate Sorry Day. During the event, attendees heard stories from the Uncles, explored the art exhibition of photos of the Uncles and Kinchela Boys Home. They also listened to music from the Uncles and their families, and had a Welcome to Country and traditional dance.

KBHAC is a not-for-profit organisation that was formed by the survivors of the State-run Kinchela Boys Home in Kempsey, NSW, who were forcibly removed from their families during childhood, now known as the Stolen Generations.

Caritas Australia's support of the Voice

Caritas Australia is committed to working towards a more just society where all can thrive. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia and respect their cultures, lands, waters, histories, and right to live in a society free of economic, social, and cultural oppression.

As an organisation, we decry the unacceptable gap between First Australians and non-Indigenous Australians, and acknowledge that these inequalities are the consequence of Australia's colonial history, systemic discrimination and injustice, and the failure to place First Australians at the centre of decision-making.

By enshrining a Voice in the Constitution, we as a community will take another step towards the full realisation of human dignity and unity for all Australians. It is only when the dignity and rights of all people are fully realised that a just and compassionate world will come into being.

HUNGER CRISIS IN HORN OF AFRICA

As the global hunger crisis continues to worsen, your generosity is supporting our partners on-the-ground to provide urgent humanitarian response to the most-affected communities.

Approximately a quarter of a billion people are now facing acute hunger - 65 million more compared to last year. Conditions in hunger hotspots like the Horn of Africa are deteriorating rapidly. In Somalia, 90 per cent of people do not have enough to eat. The recent outbreak of conflict in Sudan, accompanied by mass displacement and agricultural disruptions, will likely exacerbate the plight of this drought-stricken region.

Despite these challenges, the generosity of Caritas Australia supporters means that thousands of families can receive urgent, life-saving food, clean water and cash distribution.

The Caritas network has been responding to support vulnerable communities affected by the crisis in the Horn of Africa, including Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Eritrea.

Our partners CAFOD and Caritas Marsabit provided emergency support to people living in northern Kenya, like Talaso, a 20-year-old mother of two boys.

"When we were young, we didn't have to stress, there were no droughts like this. We'd just take care of our livestock. Our lives were comfortable then," Talaso said.

"The life now is so difficult. There is no food, there is no water, the livestock are no longer here. We used to have livestock and we used to sell the livestock and get food. Now everything is gone, and we have a very difficult life now."

In Ethiopia, urgent food aid, water, emergency cash and other essentials have been provided to more than 185,860 vulnerable people.

Ayoyo is a widow with five children living in the Jinka region in southern Ethiopia. She is a volunteer complaints officer elected by her community to handle complaints. In her role, she helps community members access government services or refer them to Caritas Ethiopia for further support. Ayoyo was chosen for the role because she is a respected and trusted member of



Talaso with her son, Ali, inside their home in northern Kenya. Photo: Thom Flint/CAFOD.

her community. Nearly all of Ayoyo's crops have been destroyed by the drought, which she said is the worst in her lifetime.

With your support, we will soon be working with a new program in Ethiopia with our partners Caritas Ethiopia/Ethiopian Catholic Church Social and Development Commission (ECC-SDCO). The program will address the ongoing food security needs of vulnerable communities in the southern region.

"The drought has destroyed all of our crops and left us very hungry, we have nothing to eat. Before, I had my husband he could support me, but now as a widow I don't have any support. Without Caritas, my children might have died."

- Ayoyo

ESCALATING CONFLICT IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The Democratic Republic of Congo is the second largest country in Africa, and home to over 95 million people. Despite its fertile land and wealth of minerals, the African nation formerly known as Zaire is unfortunately no stranger to natural disasters, conflict, gender-based violence, disease and malnutrition.

For decades, communities have been facing ongoing conflict and attacks from armed groups such as M23. The conflict has escalated considerably since October last year, with near-constant fighting forcing many villagers from their homes.

"While the world is busy and nobody is looking, we have M23 occupying villages forcing people to flee en masse from their homes. We must act quickly, because in one camp there are nearly 20,000 people crammed into one place, without water, sanitation or even shelter. This is a recipe for disaster." - Lulu Mitshabu, Caritas Australia's Program Coordinator for Democratic Republic of Congo.

Across the Ituri and North and South Kivu provinces, hundreds of people have been killed in attacks on villages, as well as thousands of houses destroyed - creating a perfect storm for displacement.


- More than 5.6 million people have been forced from their homes - including over half a million in the past year alone.
- Over 1 million have fled the country.
- 26 million people are facing acute food insecurity - one of the highest numbers in the world. This includes 15 million children.


This state of perpetual conflict and fighting has forced more than half a million people from their homes since March 2022.


Communities are facing repeated attacks on villages, including attacks on civilians, looting and burning of shelters and homes to the ground.

Thousands of people are forced to flee after each attack, seeking safety in schools, churches and outdoor markets. Families have been separated, and many households have lost almost everything to the attacks.

With your generosity, our partners CAFOD and Caritas Goma have provided much-needed humanitarian assistance in the form of:

 emergency tents and shelter for displaced families

 health support for vulnerable communities

 access to clean and safe water

 food rations for families.

Your support can also help families recover and rebuild from this terrible crisis. **Learn more and donate:** www.caritas.org.au/donate/emergency-appeals/democratic-republic-of-congo/



A woman in an IDP camp in Democratic Republic of Congo. Photo: Bitita Dany/Caritas Goma.



Salin and her family sit outside their house in Cambodia. Photo: Tim Lam/Caritas Australia.

CAMBODIA

IMPROVING ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Cambodia is well-known for its paradisiac beaches, its abundance of culture and history, as well as its ancient temples that have endured for centuries.

However, the Southeast Asian nation has a turbulent history that continues to cause suffering across the country. Although it has undergone rapid economic growth in recent years, many Cambodians still have limited access to safe drinking water and sanitation. And while the national poverty rate in Cambodia has dropped from 50 per cent to 17 per cent in the past two decades, more than 2.8 million Cambodians still live under the poverty line, with the majority of them living in rural areas.

Safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene are crucial to human health and wellbeing, according to the World Health Organisation. However, an estimated 4.2 billion

people are living without adequate sanitation facilities. Without safe water, maintaining hygiene and sanitation practices, health and wellbeing is almost impossible.

With your support, Caritas Australia works closely with our partners in Cambodia to help people like Salin, Seoun, Em and Lat access clean and safe water, build sustainable livelihoods and to improve health and sanitation.

Salin's story

Salin lives in rural Cambodia with her husband and six-year-old daughter. With the nearest water well over 1.5 kilometres from their village, it was difficult for her and her family to access clean water, and buying water transported by a truck meant that she had fewer funds to spend on other essentials.

As a school principal, Salin also wanted to see all the children in her village be healthy, attend school and complete their education. However, without access to clean water and adequate sanitation facilities, students were falling ill and missing out on school.

Thanks to your generosity, Salin joined the Upholding Community Dignity Together program. She participated in training in water management, chicken raising, business management and hygiene awareness.

Salin and her community constructed the station, and she was elected as the chairperson of the water station committee. She used her new skills to help supply clean water to people in her village, teach community members how to clean toilets, promote hygiene to school children, and manage the water distribution station to ensure villagers can access safe water.

Salin's family and village now have access to clean water, and she no longer has to spend as much money buying transported water. She is earning more income than before and raising chickens to sell for a profit, and the children at her school attend classes more regularly now as they are less likely to get sick.



Seoun and her family standing near their home in Cambodia. Photo: Mr. Seoun Ravy/Anakot Kumar.

Seoun's story

Seoun is a 66-year-old grandmother. As the head of her family, she is responsible for the wellbeing of nine people, including her six grandchildren.

Before joining the Upholding Community Dignity Together program, her family was facing numerous challenges. Without a stable source of income and a lack of access to safe and clean drinking water, it was difficult for Seoun to maintain her family's health and wellbeing. An additional lack of knowledge in available resources, and constant droughts and floods leading to crop damage made their situation even more difficult.

With your generosity and support, our local partners helped install a water system in Seoun's village, providing her family and community access to clean water and therefore improving their sanitation and livelihoods. Seoun's community has also received training in health and sanitation.

"The program has helped our community with knowledge and equipment such as toilets, water filters, water tanks, and access to clean water," said Seoun.

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



Em and Lat on their farm in Cambodia. Photo: Sam Rinang.

Em and Lat's story

Em and Lat are farmers in Cambodia who make their living from rice farming, selling livestock and growing vegetables like long beans. But ongoing water shortages and poor harvests made it increasingly difficult for the couple to make a living.

In 2018, Lat and Em joined our Upholding Community Dignity Together program and now their farm is thriving.

They learnt sustainable farming techniques, increased food and water security and improved hygiene and sanitation practices to help prevent COVID-19.

"Before I could not grow vegetables year-round and did not have enough to sell to get an income, as we had no water sources for farming," Lat says.

"Now I am raising chicken and ducks with a very low dying rate and can sell them all almost every month."

PACIFIC

UPDATES FROM SOLOMON ISLANDS



Shaniella looking after chickens. Photo: Neil Nua/Caritas Australia.

Your support for our work in the Pacific is life-changing. Countries like the Solomon Islands are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, natural disasters, as well as disruptions from social unrest.

One of the long-term programs supported by people like you is the 3H program (Happy, Healthy, Holistic program), which has been an innovative community development initiative implemented in six remote communities across three provinces in the Solomon Islands.

The 3H program will soon come to a close after five impactful years, and there have been countless stories of hope and change that we have seen unfold during that time.

Including:



152 water tanks and water points constructed with a total of **3880 individuals** gaining access to new water systems.



Vulnerability capacity assessments completed across **5 communities**.



Social justice training delivered in **6 communities**.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) training delivered across **6 communities**.



Disaster risk reduction training delivered across **5 communities**.



Emergency simulation drill exercises conducted across **2 communities**.



Nursery rhyme program conducted in **9 schools**.



Children in Solomon Islands learn nursery rhymes to help them prepare for emergencies. Photo: Caritas Australia Solomon Islands.

With your support, Caritas Australia Solomon Islands (CASI) was able to rehabilitate the school by providing resources to replace what was destroyed. This gave Shaniella the opportunity to complete her job skills training and continue her pursuit to work in hospitality and tourism.

Many of us will also remember the Singing our Way to Safety initiative featuring a children-friendly survival strategy to help children understand how to stay safe, be prepared, and respond adequately when an emergency occurs.

When a 7.3 magnitude earthquake struck the Solomon Islands last year, one of the teachers who participated in this program shared the success of this program, acknowledging that her students immediately knew how to respond.

We are grateful for all that the 3H program has achieved over the last five years, and the impact will ripple out for years to come. None of this could have been possible without your unconditional support, so for that, we thank you.

You may remember the story of Shaniella from the Solomon Islands, who had determination and drive to forge her way out of poverty through education. Devastatingly, her school was hit by a landslide and cyclone, in fast succession, destroying their water supply and food source.

OUR COMMUNITY



Kirsty and Richard during their cycling journey. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Kirsty and Richard's cycling journey

Caritas Australia's CEO, Kirsty Robertson, and Advancement Director, Richard Landels, completed an epic 700 km bicycle ride from Cairns to Townsville, touring and greeting Catholic schools and parishes along the way.

During their journey, Kirsty and Richard made stops in various towns including Mareeba, Herberton, Atherton, Ravenshoe, Godronvale, Innisfail, Silkwood, and Ingham, where they met with local school students and parishioners to share stories of how Caritas Australia and its partners are working to support communities around the world.

"The ride is one thing but as always, it is the people along the way who have made this journey special. It is such a blessing to make new friends and meet new people and spread the word about Caritas Australia," said Kirsty.

Kirsty and Richard were pleased to have completed the ride and to have had the opportunity to connect with so many students, teachers, parishioners, and supporters along the way. They look forward to continuing to build relationships and work towards a world free from poverty and inequality.

Visit to Timor Leste

Earlier this year, Bishop Umbers (Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Sydney), a delegation from the Archdiocese of Sydney, Caritas Australia staff and our in-country team in Timor Leste travelled to Baucau and Maliana in Timor Leste to see some of the amazing programs being carried out in the country.

The team had the honour of visiting one of the women's shelters supported by Caritas Australia in partnership with Caritas Baucau. Kirsty Robertson, Chief Executive Officer of Caritas Australia, remarked: ***"it was both heartbreaking and inspiring to hear the stories of the women who seek refuge there - hoping for a new life of safety and peace."***

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, Caritas Australia works with 13 local partners in protection programs that promote the protection of vulnerable women and children in Timor Leste.

These programs work to provide accommodation, specialist support, and support through savings and loans activities so that women can gain financial autonomy.



Caritas Australia Timor-Leste Country Representative Fernando Pires, Bishop Umbers, Fr Lucio de Deus, Vicar General, Maliana Diocese and Kirsty Robertson stand outside offices of the Diocese of Maliana. Photo: Nicole Chehine/Caritas Australia.

Caritas Ks

Each year, we look forward to seeing the creative and fantastic ways in which our community rallies together to raise funds for Project Compassion, and 2023 was no exception.

"The energy and passion to raise funds for Caritas Australia has been incredible this year," said Kirsty Robertson, Caritas Australia's CEO.

In Pennant Hills, Mount St Benedict College held a fantastic Caritas Ks trek. The school held their first Caritas Ks trek twenty years ago.

Emmanuel College in Melbourne held an 80's inspired Caritas Ks fundraiser, that saw different leadership team members dancing, breakdancing and moonwalking around the school oval in 80's outfits.



Students at St Liborius School, Eaglehawk performing slam poetry. Photo: Kerry Stone/Caritas Australia.

At Hargreaves Mall in Bendigo, Bishop Shane welcomed the City Mayor at an event with over 1000 free pancakes and school performances from seven schools, including a slam poetry performance.

Kolbe Catholic College in Perth held a fundraiser on World Water Day, which saw over 100 staff, students and parents complete a 3km walk carrying a bucket of water.

It is the passion and spirit of our supporters across Australia whose generosity of heart enables us to have our hands and feet in vulnerable communities across the world.

Thank you for participating in Project Compassion 2023.



ACFID MEMBER



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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island readers should be aware that this publication may contain images or names of people who have since passed away. Caritas Australia acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians, past and present, of the land on which all our offices are located.