

Your Compassion in Action



Caritas
AUSTRALIA

End poverty
Promote justice
Uphold dignity

Change starts with you | #5 September 2025

Emergencies

Updates about the earthquake in Myanmar and the ongoing war in Gaza.

Women for the World

Learn about Pronali from Bangladesh and her inspiring story.

Program snapshot

Get to know the work of our First Australians partner, Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation.

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Photo: Sumon Corraya/Caritas Bangladesh.
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Pronali teaching a group of women from her village.
Photo: Sumon Corraya/Caritas Bangladesh.

Words of Gratitude

Every day, I am deeply inspired by the courage and resilience of women living in some of the world's most vulnerable communities. Despite being disproportionately affected by enormous challenges such as conflict, climate change, food insecurity and systemic inequality, they remain determined to create a brighter future filled with opportunity and hope.

At Caritas Australia, we believe that when women and girls are empowered, entire communities thrive. That is why our annual Women for the World campaign is so important and so close to my heart. It goes beyond fundraising. It is an invitation to act, and a strong commitment to addressing the barriers that prevent women and girls from reaching their full potential.

This year's Women for the World campaign centres on Pronali – an indigenous woman from rural Bangladesh who once lacked financial independence. Through our partner Caritas Bangladesh's Safe Motherhood program, she trained as a midwife and now delivers babies in remote areas where healthcare is limited. Today, she is recognised as an essential health worker, and she dreams of opening a clinic and helping her children pursue medical education.

Through your generosity and the tireless work of our local partners, women like

Pronali are gaining access to the tools and confidence they need to transform their lives. They are leading their families and communities out of poverty, and ensuring those around them have access to food, clean water, education, healthcare and so much more. Your compassion is making this possible.

In this edition of *Your Compassion in Action*, you will find updates on the earthquake in Myanmar and the war in Gaza, as well as inspiring stories from Leaia in Samoa and Aloma from the Philippines. We also share Pronali's incredible journey, along with the pivotal work of our First Australian partner, Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation.

On behalf of everyone at Caritas Australia, thank you for your unwavering support. I hope you enjoy this edition of *Your Compassion in Action* and continue to stand with us in creating a world where every woman and girl can thrive.



With gratitude,
Kirsten Sayers
Kirsten Sayers
Chief Executive Officer

Emergencies

Ongoing conflict in Gaza

Currently, the people of Gaza are enduring catastrophic conditions, where more than 2 million people are crammed into an area smaller than 17 square miles, and 88 percent of the territory remains under military control or evacuation orders. To make matters worse, famine has recently been declared, with reports by the Ministry of Health in Gaza and the United Nations indicating that deaths from starvation are rising daily.

“The continued human suffering and loss of civilian life because of this conflict cannot continue, with a peaceful resolution now a humanitarian and life-saving necessity,” says Sally Thomas, Humanitarian Manager at Caritas Australia.

Amid violence and displacement, your generosity is making an incredible difference. With your support, our partners, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Caritas Jerusalem, are helping provide assistance in the form of emergency food, clean water, hygiene kits, shelter materials, and health and psychosocial support for children and families.

Since October 2023, our partners have supported 1.7 million people in Gaza with essential goods and services. We are also helping Church partners who have opened their doors for families with nowhere else to turn.

Humanitarian access remains restricted and the situation grows more desperate. Our partners continue to serve courageously, offering assistance in the most difficult circumstances.

Your compassion makes this possible. Thank you for standing with the people of Gaza when they need it most.

To learn more and to donate, please visit our Gaza Emergency appeal on our website:
caritas.org.au/donate/emergency-appeals/gaza-crisis/



Our partner, Caritas Jerusalem, providing healthcare to people affected by the conflict in Gaza. Photo: Caritas Jerusalem.

Myanmar earthquake

On March 28, a devastating 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck Myanmar’s Sagaing Region, leaving a trail of destruction across the country. At least 3,800 people were killed, 4,800 injured and over 220,000 displaced. Entire communities were flattened, with approximately 55,000 homes destroyed and up to 80 percent of infrastructure near the epicentre damaged.

“In the immediate aftermath of an earthquake we tend to see emergency services battling against destroyed infrastructure and struggling to move tons of rubble to save lives. Roads may be blocked and hospitals may be damaged, all of which hampers recovery efforts,” said Sally Thomas, Caritas Australia’s Humanitarian Manager.

Myanmar was already facing a severe humanitarian crisis, with 19.9 million

people – more than one-third of the population – in need of assistance before the disaster. The earthquake has compounded these challenges, overwhelming hospitals, destroying infrastructure and cutting off remote areas from life-saving aid. Markets have been disrupted, power and water supplies wiped out and communications remain unreliable.

Families who lost their homes are sleeping in the open, heightening the risk of disease outbreaks. Children and vulnerable groups face acute food insecurity and an alarming shortage of clean water and healthcare.

Caritas Australia is working with local partners to deliver emergency relief. Your generosity was critical in helping our partners respond and in supporting families to recover.

Thank you for standing with the people of Myanmar.



Buildings destroyed by the Myanmar earthquake. Photo: Benny Manser for Caritas.



Shelter kits to **2,874** households.



Cash assistance to **5,201** households.



Hygiene kits to **1,388** households.



Food assistance to **5,597** households, meeting their basic needs for food and clean drinking water.



Pronali with women and children from her village. Photo: Sumon Corraya/Caritas Bangladesh.

Pronali’s story

In remote villages of Bangladesh, where more than half the population lives below the poverty line and indigenous communities often lack access to education and healthcare, maternal health remains a critical concern. Women here are over 40 times more likely to die during childbirth compared to Australia, and for many, giving birth without trained support is an everyday reality – one that puts both mother and child at risk.

Pronali, an indigenous woman from a small village in Bangladesh, knows this struggle firsthand. Since joining the Community Managed Sustainable Livelihoods and Resilience Program in July 2021, she has become not only an essential member of her community but also a role model for expectant mothers. As a mother of two herself, she now provides antenatal check-ups, safe deliveries, and health education – saving lives and shaping a healthier future.

Like many women in her village, Pronali’s early life was marked by poverty. After completing secondary school, financial hardship forced her to abandon further studies, and she married young. For years, she was a full-time housewife, caring for her husband and children, with little community involvement.

“During delivery I had a lot of complications,” Pronali recalls. **“I thought if I can help others in my own way, so that no one else has to suffer, it would be a blessing.”**

Thanks to your generosity and support, and the work of our partners Caritas Bangladesh, Pronali completed an intensive three-week training on safe motherhood practices. She learned to recognise early warning signs, perform basic health checks such as blood pressure and weight monitoring, and refer high-risk cases to government clinics.

Before her training, there wasn’t a single qualified midwife in her village. That is why her impact has been so significant. In her first three months, she successfully delivered six healthy babies – and since the program began, not a single maternal death has been reported under her care.

“Now every day pregnant women come to me for check-ups and call me for home deliveries,” Pronali says. **“The villagers and family members honour me as an important person – their family health provider.”**

Thanks to your generosity, and Pronali’s undying dedication, she is proving that when women are empowered, entire communities thrive.

Along with your generosity, this program is supported by the Australian government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

WOMEN for the WORLD

Leaia Update

You may recall Leaia from Project Compassion 2024. Leaia and her family were living in their home, which is built entirely from recycled scraps. Without a connection to a piped water system, they relied on rainwater collected in old fridges. When the water ran out, Leaia had to walk long distances with her young children to fetch water from a neighbour.

A lack of clean water and proper sanitation didn't just make life inconvenient-it affected the family's health and disrupted the children's education. During the dry season, the children sometimes missed school because they couldn't bathe. Simple daily routines like cooking, cleaning and staying healthy were constant challenges.

Thanks to the compassion and generosity of people like you, life has changed dramatically for Leaia and her family. With the support of Caritas Samoa, a water tank was installed at her home, providing clean water for drinking, cooking and bathing. This simple but life-changing improvement meant better hygiene, better health and the chance for their children to attend school regularly.

It is clear just how far the family has come. Leaia's children are growing up strong and healthy, and their home has become a place where they can thrive. In addition to the water tank, the family now has a proper toilet and shower, greatly improving sanitation and reducing the risk of waterborne disease.

Our partner Caritas Samoa is continuing their work across vulnerable communities, installing hygienic toilets and water systems to improve the health and sanitation of families like Leaia's.

Leaia's story is a powerful reminder of the difference your compassion can make. Together, we are helping to build stronger, healthier futures for families across Samoa.



Leaia and her family posing in front of their water tank. Photo: Caritas Australia.

WOMEN for the WORLD

An update from Aloma in the Philippines

You may remember Aloma from our Women for the World campaign in 2021.

In the coastal areas of the Philippines, extreme weather brings devastating consequences, threatening the safety and food security of thousands of families. The country faces more than 20 typhoons each year, and in remote areas, rebuilding can take years.

For Aloma, the turning point came in 2013, when Typhoon Santi tore through her village. Her home was damaged, and the destruction of banana and coconut plantations left her community struggling to find food and income.

Determined to help her family and neighbours recover, Aloma joined the Integrated Community Development Program run by the Socio Pastoral Action Center Foundation Inc. (SPACFI) and supported by Caritas Australia. Thanks to your generous support, she learned bookkeeping, ecological conservation, first aid, and Disaster Risk Reduction skills.

Today, even after stepping down as her Barangay's (district) Official, Aloma remains deeply involved in community life. She regularly works with her district's partner nursery, leading planting activities. Inspired by her leadership, the entire community – children and adults alike – built a mangrove nursery. These mangroves not only protect the coastline but also create breeding grounds for fish, providing vital income for her village and its neighbours.

Aloma has also made tree planting a personal tradition, planting as many trees each year as her age – 45 last year, 46 this year – and tending to the mangroves to ensure that they are thriving.

Her dedication extends beyond the environment. She now serves as Parent Leader for the 4Ps program in her district and as Secretary of the Local Council for Women, advocating for women's welfare across her municipality. Balancing her livelihood, family care, and environmental stewardship, Aloma continues to be a driving force for resilience and hope in her community.



Aloma at her local nursery. Photo: SPACFI.

Merry Christmas

Give a gift. Change a life.

Global Gifts are cards with purpose.

Each card you buy will help someone in need, and help make the world a little bit better, every day. Your gift could help put food on a family's table for Christmas, give a young girl the possibility to stay in school, or even help a family survive the lean season.

Put your compassion into action and give a Global Gift this Christmas. You'll change lives for good and give your loved ones a meaningful Christmas card to be remembered.

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Program snapshot:

Caritas Australia's Visit to Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation

Recently, we had the privilege of visiting Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation in Western Sydney – a space where culture, connection and support intertwine. Founded by five Aboriginal Elders, Baabayn offers a place of cultural resilience and healing grounded in identity. It is a place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to strengthen or rekindle their ties to culture, Country and each other.

During our visit, we got to witness some of the stories shared between visitors and Elders. Whether it is chatting over a cuppa, children learning in the homework club, or Elders guiding others, Baabayn shows how healing happens through relationships and culture.

Baabayn also connects people with government services, other centres, and education providers like TAFE, offering culturally appropriate support in navigating these systems. It fills a crucial gap in connecting with services that often have not been designed with needs and perspectives of First Nations peoples at their centre.

One highlight was the Mums and Bubs group's book *Why Our Children Are Proud to be Aboriginal*. Illustrated by young mothers who are participants in the Baabayn Mums and Bubs group, the book brings together a collective effort in celebrating cultural pride, nurtured into future generations.

"Through artistic expression, I'm able to own my culture and honour my grandparents... Coming to Baabayn lets me speak with Elders, share experiences, and grow my sense of self," said Sheridan, one of the participants.



Sheridan painting at the Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation headquarters. Photo: Caritas Australia.

We were also able to learn about the Fences and Walls project, where Elders and women plant native seeds, symbols of healing and growth, which the next generation will nurture as they carry forward Elders' stories and strength. This integral project reflects ongoing healing, truth-telling, and the challenge of systemic barriers faced by First Nations peoples.

The work of Baabayn provides vital lessons for all Australians alike, such as the value of slowing down, listening deeply and respecting lived experience. Baabayn is a great example of First Nations-led grassroots programs building resilience locally and in a way that simply wouldn't exist otherwise.

Caritas Australia is proud to continue to support and amplify the voice of Baabayn.



In the spotlight

Meet Our New CEO – Kirsten Sayers

We are delighted to announce Kirsten Sayers as the new Chief Executive Officer of Caritas Australia. Kirsten was appointed CEO in April 2025, after serving eight months as Interim CEO. She first joined Caritas Australia as a Board Director before stepping down from that role to lead the organisation.

Kirsten brings extensive leadership experience from community, national, and international arenas, including ten years as CEO of RedR Australia, President of RedR USA, and CEO lead for the RedR International

Federation. A former international lawyer and trade and investment diplomat, she has held senior diplomatic appointments in Paris, Bangkok, Taipei, Singapore, and ASEAN, and is specialised in Indonesian, Islamic, and Chinese law. She speaks multiple languages, including Mandarin, French, Swedish, Norwegian, and Vietnamese.

Since stepping into leadership, Kirsten has been inspired by the extraordinary dedication of the Caritas Australia team, our partners, and our community of supporters. She looks forward to building on this strong foundation to help create lasting, positive change for vulnerable communities across Australia and the world.



Events and fundraisers

Project Compassion in the Diocese of Parramatta

This year, the Diocese of Parramatta showed an enormous amount of support for Project Compassion 2025.

Caritas Australia's education team worked closely with the Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese to integrate Caritas' mission and values with their Religious Education curriculum Encountering Jesus.

The Diocese's commitment to justice education was also reflected in their exceptional fundraising efforts across schools within the Diocese. In 2025, schools in the Diocese raised an incredible \$235,717, reflecting their outstanding generosity and engagement.

Schools hosted various Project Compassion events – such as pancake days, purple days, talent shows, movie nights and so much more, to raise vital funds.

This is a testament to the strong culture of solidarity, faith in action and leadership, empowering students not only to learn about global issues like water justice, but also to take meaningful action. We would like to thank the Diocese of Parramatta once again for continuing to help build a more just and compassionate world.



We would love to hear your stories of compassion!

If you have a story you would like to see featured in *Your Compassion in Action* – or would like to nominate someone from your school or parish community, please reach out to the Publications Editor at connie.zehender@caritas.org.au.



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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.

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THANK YOU

**For being a partner in compassion and
helping vulnerable people around the world
build a brighter future.**

Website: caritas.org.au **Phone:** 1800 024 413

Address: Suite 1, Level 2, Building 3, 189 O'Riordan Street, Mascot NSW 2020

ABN: 90 970 605 069



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