

Change starts with you | #6 April 2026

# Your Compassion in Action

## Emergencies

Read about the crisis in Gaza, and meet Ahmad from Project Compassion 2026.

## Project Compassion

Meet Sisilia, Manaini and Monoranjon from Project Compassion 2026.

## Sudan crisis

Caritas partners supporting the people of Sudan with food, cash, water, protection.

## In the spotlight

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**Editor:** Connie Zehender  
**Design:** Ellie Wong  
**Cover:** Sisilia and members from her SWASH club on their way to collect water at their school in rural Tanzania.  
**Photo:** Caritas Australia.  
All photos belong to Caritas Australia unless otherwise stated.



Sisilia watering her school garden. Photo: Caritas Australia.

## Words of Gratitude

For Catholics around the world, the season of Lent is a sacred time of reflection, prayer and renewal. It is a period that calls us to pause, look inward, and consider how we can live out our faith more fully through acts of compassion, generosity and solidarity with others.

Lent invites us to walk more closely with those who experience hardship and injustice. It reminds us that caring for one another – especially the most vulnerable – lies at the very heart of the Gospel. Each year, this is brought to life through Project Compassion, Caritas Australia's annual Lenten campaign.

Each year, Project Compassion unites schools, parishes and communities in a shared mission: standing alongside people around the world as they build brighter, more sustainable futures. It is a powerful reminder that even small acts of generosity, when joined together, can create extraordinary change.

In this edition of *Your Compassion in Action*, you will meet some of the remarkable people whose lives are being transformed through your generous support. Sisilia, a 13-year-old in Tanzania, now has access to clean water, giving her more time to focus on her studies and dream of becoming a pilot. In Bangladesh, Monoranjon is learning climate-resilient farming techniques that help protect his crops and strengthen his family's livelihoods. In Fiji, Manaini has developed new food processing and

gardening skills that are improving her family's nutrition.

In this edition, you will also read about the dedication of staff from Caritas Jerusalem in supporting families in the Gaza Strip despite immense personal hardship, and about the deepening humanitarian crisis in Sudan, where millions of people are facing displacement and hunger.

Thanks to the generosity of supporters like you, last year more than 2.3 million people were reached through Caritas Australia's emergency and development programs. This number represents the real lives that your generosity has helped transform. The lives of families gaining stability, children accessing education and entire communities building resilience for the future.

Thank you for continuing to journey with us through Project Compassion. Your kindness and solidarity are a powerful expression of faith in action, helping to build a more just and compassionate world for all.

On behalf of everyone at Caritas Australia, I hope you enjoy this edition of *Your Compassion in Action*.



**With gratitude,**  
*Kirsten Sayers*  
**Kirsten Sayers**  
Chief Executive Officer

***“We felt like this was unlike any other previous wars,” Ahmad recalls. “We experienced what it was like to leave our homes, our neighbourhoods, our streets, our friends and the place where we were born and lived our whole lives.”***

Ahmad sits in the rubble of a destroyed building.  
Photo: Caritas Jerusalem.

When war erupted in Gaza nearly three years ago, Ahmad's life changed overnight. Like many staff members from Caritas Jerusalem and the communities they serve, he has endured displacement, danger and heartbreaking loss. Yet through it all, his commitment to helping others has never wavered.

Forced to flee under heavy bombardment, Ahmad and his family escaped to Khan Younis with almost nothing. Without food, mattresses or blankets, they took shelter with the relatives of friends. Weeks stretched into months as food prices soared and basic necessities became increasingly scarce.

Since the war began, more than 70,000 lives have been lost, including over 20,000 children. More than two million people face hunger and displacement, while winter storms have flooded fragile tent camps, exposing families to bitter cold and contaminated water. Around one million people still urgently need emergency shelter.

For Ahmad, the crisis became deeply personal in the early hours of 12 December 2023. At 4:00 am, the house where his family was staying was bombed. Buried beneath the rubble and left with a ruptured eardrum from the blast, he soon discovered his brother had survived with devastating injuries, losing one leg and suffering severe damage to the other.

Ahmad remained by his brother's side for two months as he underwent daily surgeries in an overwhelmed hospital struggling with limited doctors, equipment and supplies.

Meanwhile, his parents were displaced again to Rafah, where the shelter they rented was also bombed, injuring relatives. With nowhere safe to go, the family reunited at the hospital, living in a tent for months before being displaced again – moving between camps in Khan Younis, an empty home in Hamad City and finally Deir al-Balah.

Through each loss and displacement, Ahmad has found strength in his work with Caritas Jerusalem's Media and Communications team.

***“Thank God we work at Caritas, allowing us to serve people in the most challenging conditions,” he says. “How beautiful it is to see a mother or child come to you for help – and to be able to support them even in the most difficult circumstances.”***



# PROJECT COMPASSION

**“When I grow up, I would like to be a pilot. I’d like to fly to different countries and pass through the sky.”**

- Sisilia

## Sisilia’s story:

**How your generosity is helping children access clean water and focus on their education**

In a remote village in Tanzania, 13-year-old Sisilia would walk nearly 30 minutes, three times a day just to collect water from a nearby canal. The water was untreated, causing her and her family to experience frequent illnesses. The long journeys also meant Sisilia would often arrive late to school, hindering her education and opportunities to forge a path out of poverty.

Sisilia’s childhood has not been easy. Her father passed away when she was just a year old, leaving her mother to care for her and her four siblings on her own. The family lives in a small, crowded home with few basic facilities, and for many years, access to safe drinking water was one of their greatest challenges.

**“When I miss school, I feel bad. The time I use fetching water affects my studies since I’d fetch water instead of going to school,”** Sisilia said.

**Above image:** Sisilia writing on a blackboard in a classroom in rural Tanzania.  
**Photo:** Caritas Australia.

The daily task was also physically exhausting.

**“I get very tired. Walking long distances Carrying heavy water containers is not easy. I was also getting piercing back pains.”**

With support from the Diocese of Mbulu Development Department through the A+ Successor Project, positive change reached Sisilia’s community when clean water taps were installed at her school. This gave students access to safe drinking water and a place to wash their hands. The water also helps maintain a school garden where children grow food for lunch.

Sisilia joined a School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (SWASH) Club, where students learn about hygiene, safe water and sanitation. Using songs, games and demonstrations, children share these lessons with their families and neighbours, helping improve health across the community.

A new water point has also been established in Sisilia’s village and she now collects water just two minutes away from home, freeing up precious time for her education.

Thanks to your generosity, children like Sisilia can now spend more time learning, growing and dreaming about their future.

## About the program

The A+ Successor project aims to support communities and schools through improvement to basic water and sanitation services, irrigation schemes, agricultural livelihood support and health services such as rural hospitals. As clean water sources are often located far away from remote villages, women and children need to walk long distances to collect drinking water. The project helps reduce this burden for community members, particularly children, by rehabilitating and constructing basic water and sanitation services near their houses, improving agricultural practices, livestock management and implementing income diversification schemes.

## Program key achievements



Rehabilitated water infrastructure in remote villages, helping **1,518** people gain access to safe and clean water.



Constructed two handwashing facilities that directly benefited **937** primary school students.



Trained **92** farmers on agriculture practices to help improve their farming knowledge, skills and productivity.

**UNITE AGAINST POVERTY this Lent**



## PROJECT COMPASSION

### Monoranjon's story:

#### Climate-smart skills are helping farmers like Monoranjon thrive

Monoranjon lives with his wife Anita and their two children, Sushmita, 14, and Chandon, five, in the southwest region of the Bangladesh. In this area, nearly 10 million people live in poverty, and almost six million struggle to meet their minimum daily needs. Like many families, Monoranjon's relies on farming and fishing to provide for his household.

Bangladesh is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change. Rising sea levels have increased the salinity of crop soils, making it harder for plants to grow and threatening the mangrove forests that protect the coastline. Additionally, extreme heat waves, droughts, floods and cyclones are becoming more frequent placing further constraints on the stability of local communities.

***"In this dry season no seedlings come out from seeds. Due to heat of the sun and lack of water, plants are dying."***

Above image: Monoranjon lives in a region in southwest Bangladesh that is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Photo: Caritas Australia.

As crops failed and fishing became less reliable, Monoranjon worried about how he would continue to support his family and keep his children in school.

With your generous support and the help of our local partner, Caritas Bangladesh, Monoranjon participated in the Community Managed Sustainable Livelihoods and Resilience Program (CMLRP-II). He joined peer learning sessions where he gained knowledge and practical skills to strengthen his family's future. Through the program, he also learnt climate-resilient farming techniques, including how to grow salt-tolerant vegetables and practice organic vegetable farming. He also developed skills in poultry and livestock rearing, and fish polyculture – helping increase the number of fish he can grow and sell.

Monoranjon now takes part in local groups that plant mangroves and raise awareness about their importance in protecting communities from climate change. As families adopt climate-smart farming and disaster preparedness strategies, the community is becoming more resilient.

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

Today, Monoranjon's family is more secure, and he proudly shares what he has learned with neighbours. With the right knowledge and support, he is helping build a stronger, more sustainable future for his community.

#### About the program

CMLRP-II, implemented by our partner Caritas Bangladesh, supports 90 villages across five districts to improve livelihoods, strengthen resilience to climate change, and promote health and social inclusion. The program helps farming families increase food security and income, while building disaster preparedness and climate adaptation skills. It also raises awareness of socio-cultural rights and strengthens access to social safety nets, particularly for marginalised groups. The project also helps improve access to essential health services, with a focus on supporting pregnant women, mothers and children.

#### Program key achievements

-  **8,506** farmers increased awareness on agricultural practices.
-  **10,051** farmers participated in peer learning on crops, livestock, aquaculture.
-  **1,495** participants supported in income-generating activities.
-  **2,957** participants involved in local/national climate advocacy.
-  **2,155** participants accessed small-scale agricultural irrigation.
-  **4,667** farmers applied climate-resilient agricultural measures.
-  **90** villages updated Community-Led Disaster Risk Management plans.

## UNITE AGAINST POVERTY this Lent



# PROJECT COMPASSION

## Manaini's story: How training is transforming life for women like Manaini

Life was hard for 44-year-old Manaini and her children living in rural northern Fiji. The family survived on what they could grow, but meals were plain and often lacked nutrition. Store-bought food was expensive, and at night the village was in darkness, leaving children and the elderly unsafe.

Almost one quarter of Fiji's population live in poverty, with higher rates in rural areas. Any extra income can mean the difference between children completing school, being able to buy medicine, or managing daily costs.

***"The things I worry about the most is my kids' education. The requirements that need to be met are hard for me to achieve with my daily income."***

Communities across Fiji also face a growing health crisis. Many families have had to shift from traditional diets of fresh fish, root vegetables and fruit to high-calorie store-

bought foods, contributing to rising rates of diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and cancer. Four out of five deaths in Fiji are caused by these preventable conditions, and every eight hours, three people lose a limb to diabetes.

Thanks to your support, everything began to change for Manaini. Through Caritas Australia's local partner, the Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development (FRIEND), she joined training in food processing. She learnt how to use leftover crops like cassava, taro and breadfruit to make flour, allowing her to bake roti and pancakes at home instead of buying expensive supermarket flour. This saves money and provides healthier meals for her family.

Manaini also received seeds and learnt organic farming techniques, including fertiliser and pest control from plants. With her women's group, she bakes cakes and pies from root crop flour to sell at a roadside stall, creating new income for her family.

The project also installed solar street lights across her village. Nights are now safer for children playing and elders walking, replacing kerosene lamps that were costly and dangerous.

***"The project as a whole has a lot of value in my life as it totally changed the life of my family and even the community,"*** Manaini said.

Through training, community support and practical tools, Manaini has strengthened her family's nutrition, income and safety. Your generosity is helping women like her create healthier, more resilient futures for their families.

### About the program

The Improving Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods project supports remote communities in Northern Fiji, addressing working poverty, climate-related food insecurity and high rates of non-communicable diseases. Through a practical, community-focused approach, the project builds skills in sustainable farming, financial literacy and income generation, including home gardening. It also strengthens disaster preparedness, helping communities build resilience and improve long-term wellbeing.

### Program key achievements



**622** people trained in food processing.



**568** people trained in organic farm management.



**532** people trained in business and financial literacy.



**526** people participated in community-based disaster risk management.



Backyard gardens distributed to **436** households.



Organic seedling banks established in **14** communities.



Solar street lights installed in **14** communities.

# UNITE AGAINST POVERTY this Lent

**Above image:** Manaini and fellow community members sell fresh fruits and vegetables they have grown and packaged on their farms, by the roadside in a small village in Fiji.  
**Photo:** Caritas Australia.

# Leave a Legacy of Love



Thandolwayo and her grandmother near their home in Zimbabwe. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

Leaving just 1% of your Estate to Caritas Australia can change the lives of so many vulnerable people around the world.

Give the gift of hope and compassion by leaving a charitable gift in your Will today.

If you would like to leave a gift in your Will or would like to know more, contact our Gifts in Wills Specialist on **0438 530 908** or [legacyoflove@caritas.org.au](mailto:legacyoflove@caritas.org.au).



End poverty  
Promote justice  
Uphold dignity



## Spotlight on Sudan: **Three years of crisis**

Sudan's conflict, now entering its third year, has produced one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises in history. Fighting and conflict have upended communities, destroyed essential infrastructure, and forced millions from their homes. As the crisis surpasses 1,000 days, Sudan has become the world's largest displacement and hunger emergency.

Over 30 million people are in need of acute humanitarian assistance, including:

- Over **14** million children.
- Over **13** million people forced to flee their homes.
- Over **20,000** people killed since April 2023.
- **750,000** people in North Darfur facing famine.

Major issues affecting civilians include widespread violence, sexual assault, collapsing healthcare, cholera outbreaks, and severe food insecurity. Most health facilities in conflict zones are non-functional, and

famine is confirmed in parts of Darfur and Kordofan. Seasonal flooding, attacks on essential services, and disruption of agricultural regions have compounded suffering.

Caritas Australia is supporting partners including CAFOD, CRS and many others through:

- Food distribution at **17** gathering points.
- Multi-purpose cash assistance to over **3,285** households (**16,425** Individuals).
- Access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene for **108,713** individuals.
- Shelter and protection services for **15,680** people, including gender-based violence support.

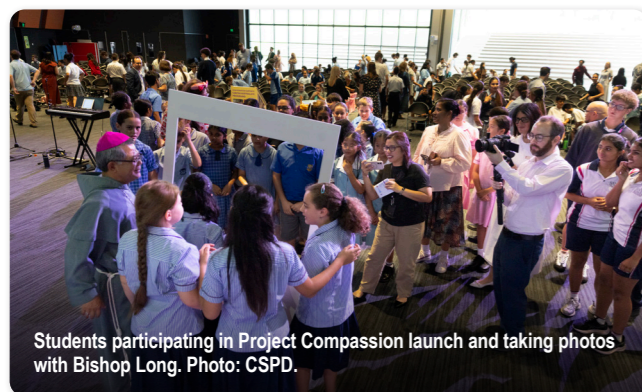
**Through your generosity, Caritas continues to deliver life-saving aid and protection, helping communities survive today while building the foundation for a more secure tomorrow.**



A camp for displaced people from Sudan. Photo: CAFOD.

## Project Compassion 2026 launches across Australia

Schools and parishes all across Australia celebrated the launch of Project Compassion in mid February. Thousands of Australian schools, parishes and supporters came together to raise funds so that people like Sisilia, Manaini, Monoranjon and Ahmad can forge a path out of poverty, and have brighter and happier futures.



Students participating in Project Compassion launch and taking photos with Bishop Long. Photo: CSPD.

### Parramatta

Over 50 Catholic Schools in the Parramatta Diocese schools gathered at St John XXIII Catholic College, Stanhope Gardens, to launch Project Compassion 2026. Student leaders, teachers, and guests – including Bishop Vincent Long, CSPD CEO Jack de Groot, and Caritas Australia's Advancement Director, Nicole Chehine – reflected on the theme 'Unite Against Poverty' and how Lent actions can create lasting change.



Project Compassion Launch at MacKillop College in Werribee, Victoria. Photo: MacKillop College.

### Melbourne

Project Compassion 2026 officially began at MacKillop College in Werribee on 17 February, with Bishop Martin Ashe and the local Caritas team led by Michael McGirr. Students received a special Caritas candle to take home, marking the start of this year's campaign encouraging schools and communities to 'Unite Against Poverty.'



Caritas Australia staff presenting in front of students from the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane. Photo: Caritas Australia.

### Brisbane

Over 500 students from across Brisbane Catholic Education came together for a powerful liturgy, which saw Archbishop Shane Mackinlay officially launch Project Compassion, marking the beginning of the Lent season.

## Project Compassion 2026 Launches Live on the Today Show

Students from St Mary's Cathedral College in Sydney helped mark the beginning of Caritas Australia's Project Compassion 2026 with a lively Today Show broadcast on Shrove Tuesday.

The school welcomed the Today Show early in the morning as students gathered to cook and serve pancakes, celebrating the start of Lent and the spirit of generosity that underpins our biggest campaign of the year. The broadcast was presented by television host Tim Davies, who joined the school community to highlight how young people across Australia support those facing poverty and hardship.

Members of Caritas Australia attended the event, including Chief Executive Officer Kirsten Sayers, who spoke about the importance of Project Compassion in helping vulnerable communities around the world. Bishop Danny Meagher also attended the event, reflecting the strong partnership between schools, the Church, the broader Australian Catholic community, and Caritas Australia in bringing Project Compassion to life.

As students flipped pancakes and shared the message of compassion, the morning captured the joy and solidarity that define Project Compassion.



Tim Davies talking to Bishop Danny Meagher as St Mary's Cathedral College students make pancakes. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Events like this demonstrate how school communities can come together in simple but meaningful ways to support people experiencing poverty and injustice globally.

**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](mailto: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.

MIX logo



**THANK YOU**

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

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AUSTRALIA

End poverty  
Promote justice  
Uphold dignity