

Partnership in Action:

Australian NGO Cooperation Program



Lector and Lute holding a goat near their home in Malawi. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Impact of the Australian NGO Cooperation Program partnership



We would like to acknowledge and thank the Australian government for their support of the Australia NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). Partnership – working in collaboration and cooperation – is at the heart of everything we do at Caritas Australia. Through our ANCP partnership, and wider partnerships with local organisations and Church networks around the world, we are able to reach where the need is greatest and work together for a just future.



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 Woiwurrung (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 Ngannawal 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.

Programs Spotlight:

Improving Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods
in the Northern Division



This new project in Fiji is helping community members like Seminili improve their livelihoods. Photo: FRIEND.

Fiji might be famous for its coral reefs and lagoons, but beyond the beaches are many remote communities that experience high levels of poverty.

Run in partnership with FRIEND and the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), this new program supports communities in northern Fiji to improve their food security and access to sustainable livelihood opportunities.

The program aims to enhance economic empowerment of community members in northern Fiji through business and financial literacy training, as well as improve health outcomes by training participants in food processing and home gardening. Another key element of the project is building disaster resilience and improving food security through nursery and solar set-ups.

The northern region of Fiji has often been neglected in terms of livelihood projects. Very few programs are established in this region and even fewer are sustainable due to the financial costs involved.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also taken a toll on the local economy.

There has been an increase in the percentage of poverty as many lost their jobs or were on lowered income. Even though the economy is slowly recovering, marginalised communities – especially people with disabilities, the elderly and women, are greatly still affected and hence this project aims to improve their economic livelihoods.

Programs Spotlight:

Innovative Climate-Smart Livelihood Enhancement for
Resilience Building Project (CLEAR)



Almaz, a member of a women's saving group, inside a vegetable nursery they cultivate in the Southwest Region in Ethiopia. Photo: Maheder Tadese/Caritas Australia.

This five-year project supports remote communities in southern Ethiopia who are suffering from repeated drought and conflict-driven crises. The most pressing concern for these rural communities is the lack of access to sustainable farming technologies. Moreover, the absence of adequate potable water is resulting in water-borne disease outbreaks in the communities.

In partnership with Caritas Ethiopia and the ANCP, this project aims to improve agricultural productivity through the provision of irrigation schemes, diversifying community members' income sources and promoting access to drinking water and irrigation technologies.

Many of the proposed activities have been tested in previous projects by Caritas Ethiopia. For example, the development of springs and boreholes for water access, the installation of solar pumps for irrigation to complement rain-fed agriculture and the introduction of donkey carts to ease the burden on women were some of the previous successful activities.



Phuong's story

Phuong using a stick to pick up her cactus.
Photo: Centre for Sustainable Rural Development.

Phuong*, 24, lives in the Quang Tri province in Vietnam. Her disability has left her fully paralysed from below her arms and needing to use a wheelchair. As a result, Phuong finds it difficult to exercise her leg muscles, which is vital to maintaining her health.

Sadly, Phuong lost her mother to cancer at the start of 2023. Her mother had always been by her side, helping with daily activities and offering support. With her mother gone, Phuong often felt hesitant to ask her father or brothers for help, so she turned to online resources to learn how to manage on her own.

Approximately 80 percent of people with disabilities live in countries that lack the infrastructure and facilities to support them.

Prior to joining the Together We Can program, run by Caritas Australia's partner the Centre for Sustainable Rural Development and in partnership with the Australian Government, Phuong felt less hopeful and had to drop out of school because of her disability. Additionally, the costs of her treatment, hospital fees and medication, caused financial strain to her family.

With the support of the ANCP, our partners organised a therapist to visit her once a month for rehabilitation. This helped improve her health by exercising her muscles.

The program also helped support her family with ways to generate income from her father's grocery shop.

"The program has helped my father and I make more

money for the household through the shop. I also feel happier and more encouraged," said Phuong.

Together We Can helps empower people with disabilities to actively participate in their communities and access parental training, community engagement, vocational training, and livelihood development.

"By the end of this year, I hope to be able to stand. I do my exercises every single day and I can point my feet now. My father helps my practice by raising my bed up, so that my feet touch the ground. The first thing I would like to do if I can stand and walk is visit my mother's grave," she added.

**Name has been changed to protect their identity.*



180 people attended disaster preparation training, receiving a disaster response toolkit.



9 households with people with a disability were supported in upgrading their housing to ensure a safe living environment during disaster season.



44 households with people with a disability received financial support to invest in livelihood activities



Memory's story

Memory outside a hydroelectric power plant in Malawi.
Photo: Caritas Australia.

Memory, 27, grew up in the Mwanza district in southern Malawi, with her parents and her four siblings. Her parents are subsistence farmers who depend on their crops for survival.

As the eldest child in her family, Memory encountered numerous challenges in her daily life. She had to support her family with domestic chores such as farming, collecting water, cooking and cleaning, and taking care of younger siblings, alongside her own education efforts.

Economic opportunities for girls in Malawi are constrained by high levels of early school leavers and women typically tend to work in lower-paying jobs or have no source of income. For every 100 girls who start their education, only three will finish.

"When I was in primary school, I went to school barefoot because my parents didn't have money to buy shoes for me. But I told myself I can't stop going to school because this is the only way I can get a better life," said Memory.

Having to support her family meant that her education was hanging by a thread. Memory feared that she would get stuck in an endless cycle of poverty and meet the same fate as so many other women in Malawi.

Caritas Australia worked closely with our local partner Catholic Development Commission in Malawi (CADECOM) to bring the A+ Program to Memory's village. Along with the generosity of our supporters, this program is also funded by the Australian Government through the ANCP.

The A+ Program helped her with tuition and boarding fees, thus she decided to pursue training in carpentry to support herself, her family and prove to her community that women can work in male-dominated industries.

Memory graduated with an Advanced Certificate in Carpentry and Joinery. With the knowledge and skills acquired, she secured a job as a carpenter at one of the largest hydroelectric power companies in Malawi.

She has become the very first female carpenter in her village and a trailblazer for other girls and young women wanting to pursue a career in a male-dominated industry.



10 community level campaigns on gender, persons living with disability and social inclusion.



3 campaigns organised against gender-based violence.



6 community training sessions on gender equality, women's equal right and persons living with disability.



15 women trained to take on for leadership roles.

Insights and learning

During the 2023-24 period, four ANCP programs underwent external evaluations in Cambodia, Indonesia and Timor-Leste. These are some of the common themes that emerged from the evaluations, which will help further improve and innovate our current and future programs.

Integrated community development

The evaluations emphasised the community-led nature of our ANCP-funded programs. These achieved positive changes in food production, protection against gender-based violence, improved household incomes, 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 that the revitalisation of existing farmer groups promoted a positive group culture, making the adoption of new technology faster.

Program effectiveness and participation

During the evaluation, the Sustainable Livelihoods/ Disaster Risk Reduction program in Timor-Leste demonstrated increased participation rates, exceeding its target participant numbers. Program partners reported that those who participated in the horticulture program achieved an increase in

vegetable production and associated increased income. These improvements enabled increased access to food and spending on education.

The Savings and Loans Groups reported a range of benefits for participants including enhanced financial literacy and organisational skills, empowering them to manage their finances effectively. Disaster Risk Reduction training has led to an improved ability to respond to and prevent disasters in a number of communities.

Impact of climate change

Climate change and its impact on communities is a central theme for consideration for future program planning and design. Communities are highly aware of the impact of climate change on their lives and are keen to expand their knowledge and skills in climate smart agriculture and access the resources to achieve water security, land stabilisation and resilient crop production.

While awareness of climate change impacts was mentioned many times during consultation, there was also emerging awareness of how climate change and resulting natural disasters have a greater impact on women and girls and inflame already concerning rates of gender-based violence.

Climate Meta Review

Caritas Australia commissioned a Climate Action Review that was supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to assess our 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 our programs portfolio, while the review also highlighted a number of notable climate-related achievements over the years, including:

- Being appointed by the Bishops Plenary Decree as the lead agency to drive the rollout of Laudato Si’ Action Plans across more than 3,000 schools and parishes in Australia.
- Increasing the number of projects with a focus on climate action across our programs portfolio.
- Taking our report on non-economic loss and damage to COP28.

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

- Develop a flagship climate action program to bring together and elevate our wide-ranging climate initiatives.
- Continue to deepen connections and partnerships to explore locally-led solutions to climate change.

- Continue to invest in strengthening the capability of staff and partners in relation to climate action.
- The findings of this review the development of our Climate Justice Roadmap, which 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

Following up on recommended actions from the Gender Equity, Disability and Social Inclusion program meta review held in the previous year, Caritas Australia engaged CBM Australia and CBM International Advisory Group for a series of training on disability equity, rights and inclusion for 23 Caritas Australia staff and 15 partners across 9 countries in Asia.

“The workshops increased awareness, rights, approaches and practices. They also enhanced the skills and confidence of Caritas Australia and partner staff 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 selected number of partners also received tailored support to address specific disability inclusion challenges in their projects.



Members of a women's Savings and Loans group in Timor-Leste.




Thu and his wife Linh pose for a photograph at their home in Quang Tri province, Vietnam.





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