

A young girl with braided hair, wearing a yellow t-shirt and a red and white patterned sarong, and a young boy in a blue t-shirt are smiling as they plant a small green sapling in a field. The background is filled with lush greenery, including palm trees and banana leaves. On the left side of the image, there is a vertical decorative border consisting of a series of white triangles pointing downwards.

Seeds of hope

CARITAS STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT
FOR OCEANIA 2019 REPORT



Caritas
OCEANIA



Teruabine Anna Nuariki from Kiribati Climate Action Network: "Mangroves are our giants – they protect our land from erosion. We have to plant because that will solve our problem ... it can help to stop the tide and the strong waves from coming, that will help to lessen it and to hold our sand."

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Introduction

The *Caritas State of the Environment for Oceania* report series has monitored critical issues affecting the life and wellbeing of Oceania and its peoples since 2014. The five main issues we monitor are: rising seas and coastal erosion, extreme weather, access to safe local food and water, offshore mining and drilling, and climate finance.

For the life of Oceania, we continue to call for urgent action to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees, and climate finance to assist our poorest communities. This target is imperative for survival in Oceania.

The climate emergency hit the mainstream in 2019. Local and national governments formally declared “climate emergencies”, while strong, young voices took to the streets to draw attention to our collective future.

Many in Oceania have been living the climate emergency for decades. It is part of everyday life, integrated into conversations on how to cope with interrelated social, economic and environmental challenges. People are preparing for more extreme weather and sea level rise, as well as protecting shorelines, rivers, streams and forests.

In its 2019 special reports, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlighted the complex relationship between climate change, land and oceans, and likely ongoing impacts on people.

In June 2019, Pope Francis told oil and gas chief executives that faced with a climate emergency, we must “avoid perpetrating a brutal act of injustice towards the poor and future generations.” He said our children

Let us all climb aboard the same canoe and together seek a better world, with the constantly renewed momentum of the Holy Spirit.

POPE FRANCIS, CHRISTUS VIVIT, MARCH 2019

and grandchildren should not have to pay the price of our irresponsibility.

Last year's United Nations climate conference in Poland failed to deliver the commitment and ambition needed to protect the planet from catastrophic warming. As we move towards this year's conference (COP25) in Chile, may we heed the voices of those most affected by the degradation of the earth. As Pope Francis says, "Today's young people are saying, 'The future is ours', and they are right!"

This year, Caritas has sought to listen to what young people, Indigenous people, scientists and those living close to the land and ocean are telling us about what they are experiencing, and what needs to happen. This is what we heard, these are the voices of Oceania for 2019.

CARITAS



The voices of young people have been prominent in calling for urgent climate action this year – outside New Zealand Parliament, March 2019.



Caritas Oceania environmental monitoring

The *Caritas State of the Environment for Oceania* report series grew out of increasing concern among the communities with whom we work about changes in our environment impacting poor and marginalised people. It shares voices from Oceania on what is happening, and promotes action required to protect and enhance our common home in Oceania.

The report is released annually around the Feast of St Francis (4 October). It is supplemented online by story maps, video and discussion, accessible through <https://caritas.org.nz/state-environment>.

Caritas in Oceania puts practical works of advocacy, education and human development programmes into action, upholding the human dignity and God-given creativity of all the peoples of Oceania. Caritas Oceania comprises Caritas agencies in Tonga, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, as well as member churches of the Episcopal Conference of the Pacific (covering most Pacific Islands apart from Aotearoa New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Hawai'i). Each Caritas member is responsible to its respective Bishops.

As Caritas Oceania they work together on common issues, strengthen and support each other, and provide a regional voice to the international Caritas Internationalis confederation. This network consists of 160 Catholic aid, development and social justice agencies worldwide, working to end poverty, promote justice and restore dignity to all peoples.

Caritas Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which our offices stand and we pay our respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge the sorrow of the Stolen Generations and the impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We also recognise the resilience, strength and pride of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand acknowledges the mana whenua of Te Ātiawa ki Te Whanganui-a-Tara where our main office is based. Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand pays its respects to all tangata whenua of Aotearoa.



Taiwan TROPIC OF CANCER

Philippines

PHILIPPINE SEA

Northern Mariana Islands

Saipan

Guam

Marshall Islands

Federated States of Micronesia

Kolonia



JUSTINE MAKEU, KEREMA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA:
People still drink contaminated water which destroys the gardens; the fish look different.

Banaba

Nauru

Indonesia

New Ireland

Papua New Guinea

Carteret Islands

New Britain

Solomon Islands

Bougainville

Honiara

TORRES STRAIT

Port Moresby



NIC NELSON, AUSTRALIA:
Australia must step up as a leader. Real leadership on climate change requires more. More ambition, more commitment, more courage.

Vanuatu

New Caledonia

Port-Vila

Noumea

Australia

Kingston

Norfolk Island



MARTIN DE JONG, AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND:
We need all the wisdom of our ancestors and all the agility of our youth to steer our canoe in a new direction.

Aotearoa New Zealand

Dunedin

Oceania voices 2019

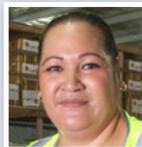
Hawaii



TERUABINE ANNA NUARIKI, KIRIBATI:
Mangroves are our giants – they protect our land from erosion.



TUIAFUTEA VA'AFUSUAGA, SAMOA:
Everyone working together strengthens us against any forces.



AMELIA MA'AFU, TONGA:
People have no choice but to have some kind of coping capacity and resilience.



MINA POMARE-PEITA, AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND:
We don't live with the land, we live on it.





Caritas assessment of environmental impact 2019

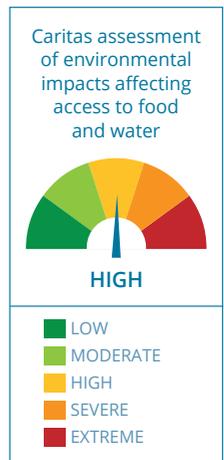
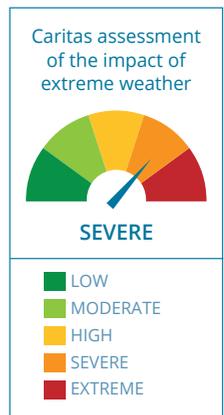
The Caritas assessment of impact on people in Oceania for our five issues is based on official data and observations of staff, partners and associates in the region. On subsequent pages, you can read some of the stories and perspectives that led to these conclusions. More coverage is also online at <https://caritas.org.nz/state-environment>

Extreme weather

We scaled up our assessment for this year to **severe**. The Northern Marianas has taken a long time to recover from Super Cyclone Yutu in October 2018, while Tonga still shows the impact of Gita from February 2018. Heavy rain events caused multiple deaths in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Australia. Thousands of people were affected by displacement or food shortages. Many of these events were out of season or out of place. Australia had its hottest ever summer and New Zealand its second hottest.

Environmental impacts on food and water

Food and water impacts remain at **high**. Extreme weather events impacted food and water supplies in localised areas – some affecting thousands of people. Irresponsible extraction or transportation of minerals has also posed short and long-term threats to food and water supplies.



Coastal erosion, coastal flooding & sea level rise

Our assessment remains at **high**. King tide flooding, coastal encroachment and sea wall breaches are a part of daily life, while planning for long-term impacts of sea level rise is increasingly in the news.

Offshore mining and drilling

The impact of offshore mining and drilling remains at **moderate**. Nautilus Minerals has been delisted as a public company, but the Solwara1 mining licence in Papua New Guinea is still valid. International bodies are not acting in the best interests of Oceania, while coastal seabed mining extraction in Fiji is impacting local food sources and livelihoods.

Climate finance

Climate finance for the most vulnerable people continues to be **woefully inadequate**. Despite large scale projects through the Green Climate Fund and other sources – and attention to the vulnerable in Samoa’s Vaisigano Catchment Project, the region is still not seeing the necessary attention to the most vulnerable. Smaller projects and communities still struggle to access appropriate funding.

Caritas assessment of the impact of coastal flooding and erosion



Caritas assessment of the impact of offshore mining and drilling

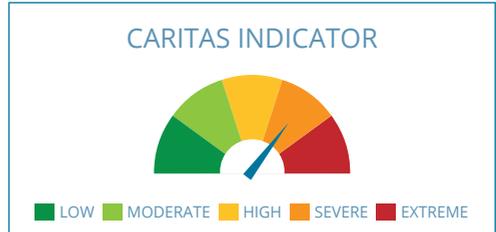


Caritas assessment of climate finance for the most vulnerable



1 Extreme weather

Super Cyclone Yutu devastated the US territory of **Northern Mariana Islands** in Micronesia in October 2018. It killed two people, carried away corrugated metal from houses, and uprooted large trees. Recovery has been long: it took four months to restore power and re-roof houses. Ongoing rebuilding has been delayed due to few skilled labourers and slow official assessments, according to Pacific researcher Gretchen Druliner. By July, more than 1,000 people were still homeless on the main island of Saipan, including 330 children.



Multiple heavy rain events affected several countries in Oceania. (See Table of Extreme Weather events on page 18.)

The vulnerability of children was shown by an April landslide in Enga province, **Papua New Guinea** that killed eight people: five of the dead were children, and a further four children were noted as missing. January floods in Kairuku district were worsened by sediment and chemicals from the Tolukuma Mine. Caritas Papua New Guinea is exploring long-term mitigation.

In early January, a series of storms brought two weeks of rain to **Solomon Islands**, causing floods and landslides over a wide area.

In **New Zealand**, a severe storm in March killed one person in Westland and opened up an old rubbish dump on the Fox River, strewing waste along a fifty kilometre coastline. School students from Te Kura Taumata o Panguru (a Caritas partner – see back cover) were among hundreds of volunteers who helped the massive clean-up. A Local Government New Zealand report in March 2019 identified 112 similar landfills at risk from a 0.5 metre sea level rise.

Australia had its hottest summer on record and New Zealand its second hottest. Wildfires stretched resources, while a heat wave killed hundreds of thousands of native fish in New South Wales.

Facing the reality of more frequent and intense weather events, in **Tonga**, Caritas is working with young people to train villages in disaster preparedness and pre-positioning of emergency supplies in certain localities. “People have

no choice but to have some kind of coping capacity and resilience. ...We can't talk about disaster preparation without talking about climate change," says Caritas Tonga Director Amelia Ma'afu.

In **Samoa**, Caritas has also created Community Emergency Response Teams who can set up and manage emergency shelters in predetermined locations, and lead post-disaster assessment and distribution of relief supplies.

Impact and recovery in Northern Marianas

"500 Sails" in south Saipan, **Northern Marianas**, is a non-profit organisation instructing youth and adults in swimming, sailing and Proa (traditional canoe) building. Ten months after Cyclone Yutu, they have had multiple changes in emergency management staff, multiple inspections from structural engineers, and false positives of "good to go" messages. They continue to work from their damaged building, open to the elements: committed to their mission of providing swimming and sailing lessons to the community and canoe revival.



2 Food and water

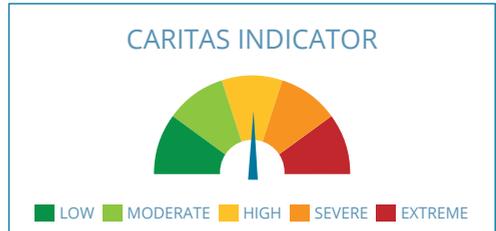
Land-based oil and mineral extraction is damaging food and water sources in **Papua New Guinea**. Gold mine tailings are raising the level of and contaminating the Angabanga River says Justine Makeu,

Development Secretary for Kerema Diocese. “Water tops over the banks and there is flooding. People still drink contaminated water which destroys the gardens; the fish look different. ... It affects the children with diarrhoea. No help is happening from the Local Level Government.” In East Kerema, oil from a disused oil rig, turns the Kapore river from brown to black two to three times a year. Several thousand people are forced to drink contaminated water as there is no rain water collection system.

In **Fiji**, gravel extraction in Delakado means that “Waters of life have been turned into rivers of death,” says Kositatino Tikomaibolatagane of Caritas Fiji. While the gravel paves roads elsewhere in the Pacific, the muddied water is killing fish and prawns, and smothering coral reefs. Tourism is also affected.

In **Solomon Islands**, residents of Kangava Bay faced double disasters affecting food sources. In April 2019, bauxite (aluminium ore) carrier *Solomon Trader* ran aground, spilling up to 100 tonnes of oil near a World Heritage Area. In July, after a clean-up had been completed and seafood ban lifted, another carrier ran aground, spilling 5000 tonnes of bauxite into the bay. It smothered marine life, and could affect fish long-term.

By June 2019, in the **Northern Mariana Islands**, months after Cyclone Yutu had hit (October 2018), mango, citrus, breadfruit, and other fruiting trees were still not bearing fruit.



Community and environmental protection in Samoa

The Falease'ela Environment Protection Society (FEPS) was established in 2007 to protect a 1700 hectare forest and the Liua le Vai o Sina river that provides water for three districts. When a Pacific-wide drought in 2011 dried up the lower river bed, the society and village stepped up their response.

They have planted more than 18,000 native trees in the lowland. Buffer zones near river banks protect the river from erosion as roots keep the soil from washing into the stream. A healthier river is providing crab, fish, and shrimp to the community.

Eco-tourism businesses are supporting the most vulnerable. Tuiafutea Va'afusuaga, a member of FEPS, says, "We want to bring people from around the world and show them that we have created a sustainable community that cares for their environment and creates businesses as naturally as possible. ... Everyone working together strengthens us against any forces."

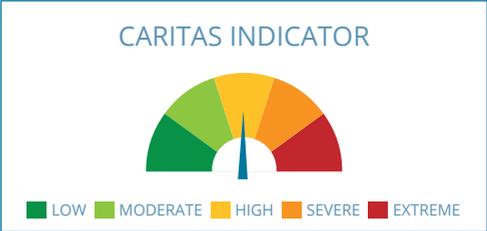


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Members of FEPS working to restore their river.

3 Coastal erosion and sea level rise

In **Tonga**, coastal issues show the long-term impact of Cyclone Gita. Damage to toa and palm trees along the coast is visible months after Gita hit in February 2018. Toa are known as ‘fortifiers’ in Tonga and bind the soil together.



In **Solomon Islands**, encroaching seas near Walo, Malaita threaten the only road (pictured) for vehicles to take produce to Auki – for access to



markets and the sea port to Honiara. Local chief Kedimel Kukuidei said erosion started when the British protectorate constructed a road to Malu’u substation decades ago. It has now eaten away more than 100 metres from the original coastline. Rocks and stone used to mitigate coastal erosion were also destroyed and removed during the road construction. King tides and wave surges in December 2019 were the most severe their community has faced.

In **Kiribati**, Tibeera Kautuuna, Treasurer for the Catholic Women’s Association, said coastal erosion has clawed back 20 metres of the shore frontage outside her former home on Betio. An ocean-side sea wall is broken and no longer protects the house. The loss of coconuts, pandanus and fruit means they have to buy those now.

In **Papua New Guinea**, people continue their local struggles against sea level rise and king tide disasters. Marie Mondu, Development Secretary for Catholic Bishops Conference, PNG/Solomon Islands says, “We are watching our shores eaten out year after year. With little outside information and low literacy rates, how do we make sense of what’s happening to our environment?”

In Solosolo, **Samoa**, (where destructive black sand mining was detailed in last year's report), the village decided to put a stop to all sand mining activities in the area in August 2019. The village council agreed they needed to protect their natural resources in the coast and river mouth. The sand will remain in place, meaning the coast can now begin a process of unimpeded healing. Villagers hope that nature can bring back some of what it gave before.

National Park development in Tonga worsens flooding

Coastal flooding problems have worsened for people in low lying Pa Tangata on the eastern edge of Nuku'alofa, Tonga, adjacent to the main Fanga'uta Lagoon.

The area suffers regular seawater flooding in King tides and storms. Reclamation for the Popua National Park filled a swamp area with crushed gravel. While this now restricts sea water coming through to residential areas in King tides, it also means that in heavy rain Pa Tangata is still prone to flooding. It takes a long time to dry. There is no way for the water to flow back to the sea.

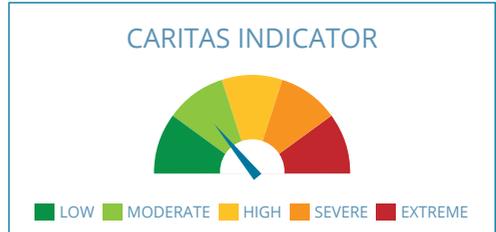
Fakei Latu has lived in the area for three decades: "The Government dug a canal that connects to the Fanga'uta lagoon, which we believe carries poisonous gas and chemicals from the old public rubbish dump area – now the Popua National Park. Hopefully it does not spread out to the Nuku'alofa harbour where we are fishing and catching our seafood from, as it is our main source of income".

A house in Pa Tangata, scene of frequent flooding.



4 Offshore mining and drilling

Full-scale deep sea mining continues to be kept at bay in Oceania. By August 2019, a much reduced Nautilus Minerals was in the hands of its two main shareholders – MB Holding and Metalloinvest. Nautilus was behind the planned Solwara1 offshore mine in **Papua New Guinea** (PNG). It has left the PNG government, a 15 percent stakeholder in the project, with a massive debt. It is unclear what will happen to Nautilus equipment for the venture, and other interests are in the wings.



A report released in July 2019¹ suggested inappropriate collusion between international bodies developing regulatory frameworks for seabed mining and prospective deep sea mining companies, at the expense of local communities in Oceania. The International Seabed Authority (ISA – the United Nations body overseeing seabed activities in international waters) seems to be actively supporting particular mining companies. The report also said joint work by the Pacific Community (SPC) and European Union (EU) on a regional legislative framework and agreement on seabed mining has inadvertently facilitated seabed mining activities in the Pacific Ocean.

In **Tonga**, Caritas Tonga director Amelia Ma’afu says there has been a strong push from Tonga’s government, backed by the United Nations to open up Tongan waters for seabed mining. She said it was clear from a Pacific regional workshop on seabed mining held in Tonga in February 2018, that while Tonga has seabed mining legislation, the regulation framework has yet to be completed, and there are already 29 approved applications within Tongan waters and the High Seas. “Tonga’s population at large still do not know enough about what is involved in seabed mining and the potential long-term environmental impacts,” she said.

1 Mining Watch Canada; Deep Sea Mining Campaign; London Mining Network July 2019: *Why the Rush? Seabed Mining in the Pacific Ocean.*

Due to the complex environmental threats to our oceans, Caritas says seabed mining and exploration should cease until more is known about likely impacts. The *Why the Rush* report calls for at least a 20 year moratorium to allow for public debates, greater transparency and better regulations.

Offshore mining destroying food in Fiji

While the Fijian government said in June 2019 that it would ban sea-bed mining, destructive iron sand mining continues offshore round the Ba river mouth in Ba Province. It is destroying food sources and livelihoods for the people of Votua and Nawaqarua, according to Caritas Fiji's Kositatino Tikomaibolatagane.

There was no proper consultation for the issuing of the mining licence. Many people, especially clan leaders who signed the documents, did not fully understand about the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) which justified the licence to be given and development work to begin.

The waste from the mining is put back in the sea. It is changing a clear blue ocean to a brown black one which will pollute the sea and reef nearby, killing protein sources for the people of Votua and Nawaqarua.



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Talking with community members from Votua.

5 Climate finance

The **New Zealand** Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade continues a two year trend of increased climate finance. About NZ\$78 million was spent in the 2018/2019 financial year, excluding contributions to multilateral agencies. Of this total, about \$67.5

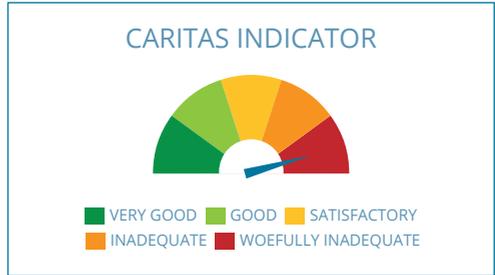
million was spent in the Pacific. This compares to \$63 million (\$59 million to the Pacific) in the 2017/18 financial year. In the Pacific, \$29.7 million was spent on adaptation, \$11.2 million on mitigation and \$26.7 million across both areas.

Australia has stopped further funding to the Green Climate Fund, in favour of a AUD\$2 billion Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP), of which \$1.5 billion would be provided through long-term loans. Caritas says funding should be through grant schemes, rather than saddling the Pacific with more debt.

“We are in the critical decade for action on climate change,” says Nic Nelson, Caritas Australia’s Director of Advocacy and Communications. “Australia must step up as a leader. Real leadership on this issue requires more. More ambition, more commitment, more courage. Aid to the Pacific is good. Supporting the UN Green Climate Fund is better. Real action to reduce emissions pollution at home is best. Combining all three is what Australia really must do now.”

Caritas **Tonga** is frustrated at civil society being marginalised in the reviewing and monitoring of climate finance, as the Tonga Climate Change Taskforce did not meet for several months. Director Amelia Ma’afu says there is an over-focus on infrastructure and imbalance of mitigation over adaptation for people who need it most.

“It’s good to have renewable energy to minimise carbon emissions, but equally of importance is that people should be given the funds to be able to cope with climatic changes that are already upon us. People who have to keep water out of their houses, people who try to keep their children out of the



water because it's unsafe – they are being provided with nothing.”

The Green Climate Fund-financed Vaisigano Catchment Project in Apia, **Samoa** aims to improve flood protection for about 27,000 people. An offshoot of the USD\$66 million project includes a programme supporting ecosystem-based adaptation enterprises. Local café owner Andrew Pedrana sought funds for a plastic recycling scheme and a carbon free air-conditioning model. He said the elaborate process to complete project proposals was challenging, even with a computer and internet access. He could only imagine how hard it must be for others with little to no education, no computer access, and no knowledge of grant procedures. He was concerned about lack of access to funds by the poorest and most vulnerable along the Vaisigano River. (See other Green Climate Fund projects in Table on page 18.)

Where's the money, where's the food?

Marie Mondu, Development Secretary for the Catholic Bishops Conference of **Papua New Guinea/Solomon Islands** says they've witnessed mismanagement among international donors and state departments. While millions of dollars have gone into Environment, Conservation and Emergency Responses, very little good has been done for people displaced by climate change.

One of the places most affected are the Carteret Island atolls, home to 2,700 people who are being resettled on mainland Bougainville in a long-term programme supported by Caritas. Traditional food sources have

declined due to sea level rise and erratic weather. The Bougainville government is supposed to provide food relief each quarter, but up until 31 July 2019, only one boat load of supplies had been made to the islands, according to Marie Mondu.

Carteret Islanders resettling on Bougainville are learning the art of agriculture – but there is scant assistance from large donors.



TULELE PEISA

TABLES

Extreme Weather events: July 2018–June 2019

Date	Event Name	Location	Deaths	Other impacts
October	Cyclone Yutu	Northern Marianas	2	500 homes destroyed
Dec–Jan	Tropical Cyclone Penny + floods	Solomon Islands	3 deaths; 6 lost at sea	24,000 people affected
Jan–Feb	Townsville floods	Queensland, Aust	3	1000 people affected
Jan–Feb	Floods	Central Province, Papua New Guinea (PNG)	6	50,000 people affected
Feb	Typhoon Wutip	Guam, Federated States of Micronesia		10,000 affected; 160 houses destroyed
March	West Coast floods	South Island, NZ	1	
March	Cyclone Trevor	Good Enough Island, PNG		15,000 people with food shortages
April	Enga landslide	Enga Province, PNG	8 dead; 4 missing	50 displaced; 18 houses swept away

This table has been prepared from various sources as accurately as possible. Sources include EM-DAT: Emergency Events Database (www.emdat.be), OCHA, floodlist.com and Radio New Zealand.

Green Climate Fund Pacific projects approved 2018

Project/Duration	Amount (USD million)
Kiribati: South Tarawa Water Supply Project: solar-powered desalination plant (mitigation & adaptation) (Oct 2018 – Implementation 6 years)	58.1m Total project investment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Climate Fund: 28.6m (49.3%) • Asian Development Bank: 16m • World Bank: 13m • Kiribati Government (guarantee): 1.5m
Tonga: Renewable Energy Project under Pacific Islands Renewable Energy Investment Program (mitigation) (Oct 2018 – Implementation 3.5 years; 25-year lifespan)	53.2m Total project investment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Climate Fund: 29.9m (56.2%) • Tonga Power Limited 3.0m • Government of Australia 2.5m • Asian Development Bank 12.2m • Tonga Government 5.6m
Marshall Islands: Pacific Resilience Project Phase II (adaptation) (March 2018 – Implementation 5 years)	44.1m Total project investment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Climate Fund: 25.0m (56.6%) • World Bank 19.1m
Nauru: Sustainable and Climate Resilient Connectivity (mitigation & adaptation) (March 2018 – Implementation 5 years)	65.2m Total project investment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Climate Fund: 26.9m (41.3%) • Asian Development Bank 20.7m • Australia Government 13.5m • Nauru Government 4.1m

An earlier list was published in Caritas Oceania's 2017 report. Source: www.greenclimate.fund.

Conclusion

The planet is facing multiple environmental challenges. Climate change and biodiversity loss is having a huge impact in Oceania. Many people have died and many suffer because the rich and powerful have not heard and responded quickly enough to the cry of the earth and the poor, nor heeded the warnings of scientists. Now that more of the global community are waking up to reality, we risk prioritising infrastructure over people, and adaptation for the rich rather than the poor. The rush for renewables may put additional pressure on the 'new frontier' of seabed mining for necessary minerals. Our oceans face enough threats. We need integrated, holistic solutions to protect air, land, oceans and people. We're in dire straits. We need all the wisdom of our ancestors and all the agility of our youth to steer our waka, our canoe, in a new direction.

Recommendations

Governments and international bodies

- Australia and New Zealand to honour their international climate change commitments and meet their fair share of the global climate finance goal of USD\$100 billion (from public and private sources) per annum by 2020, committed to by developed nations in 2010. It should be *additional* to existing aid commitments.
- Governments should increase and improve climate-related finance for local communities. They should provide clear explanation of procedures and appropriate guidance. Local populations need to participate in every step of a project, to incorporate local/traditional knowledge.
- Greater coordination between funding organisations, governments and remote vulnerable populations.
- A stop to both seabed mining and exploration until more is known about impacts.

Civil society

- Groups advocating on climate change need to work with government departments, educational institutions, civil society, churches, communities and individuals to influence changes in policy and practice.

Communities and individuals

- Get connected – find out what is happening to your local environment. Build local resilience, restore ecosystems and waterways.

The last word – from the past to the future

In May 2019, Caritas journeyed with children, teachers, government agencies and local elders into the heart of Au Warawara – the ancestral forest of the Te Rarawa people in Aotearoa New Zealand. Au Warawara once provided food, resources and spiritual connection for Te Rarawa.

Over the last 150 years, it had been ravaged by logging and pest destruction. It is now being restored in a partnership between Te Rarawa and the government, in cooperation with local schools and other agencies, linking old and young together. Earlier, Mina Pomare-Peita, principal of local school Te Kura Taumata o Panguru, had invited Caritas to prepare a resource to help students reconnect them to their land, traditions and ancestors. “We received from the government a sick forest,” says Mina,

If we journey together, young and old, we can be firmly rooted in the present, and from here, revisit the past and look to the future.

— POPE FRANCIS, *CHRISTUS VIVIT*

and much needs to be done to restore people’s relationship to the land. “We don’t live with the land, we live on it,” she says.

The visit in May was the first time these particular young people had been inside the forest. It marked the beginning of the next ambitious and innovative phase of the project, which will have the youth working with virtual reality to experience what the forest once was, and what it could be in the future. “Our project embraces the long survivorship of Kauri – 2000 years to re-establish a physical and regular connection between our future problem-solvers and these ancient trees of Au Warawara,” says the Warawara Kaitiaki Komiti.

Kaumatuā (elder) Wiremu Peita of Te Rarawa addresses youth in the heart of Au Warawara.



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Lead research and writing: Martin de Jong

Caritas Oceania contributors and oversight: Karen Anaya, Julianne Hickey, Amelia Ma'afu, Marie Mondu, Nic Nelson, Malialosa Tapueluelu, Kositatino Tikomaibolatagane, Mavis Tito, Puletini Tuala, Sr Senolita Vakata, Father Pesamino Victor, Zhi Yan

Additional research and writing: Karwin Go, Gretchen Druliner

External advisors: Tim Poasa Baice, James Renwick

Design: Rose Miller

Staff assistance: Dominic Baona, Phil Brass, Amanda Craddock, Marion Ferguson, Bernard Holland, Mareta Tana, Roger Ellis

Cover photo: Children planting trees as part of Caritas Samoa's contribution to Samoa's "2 million tree planting" campaign.

Credit: Karen Anaya

Caritas expresses sincere appreciation to the people and communities who feature in this report and to many others who assisted in any way.

Caritas acknowledges the passing away during 2019 of Bishop of Bougainville (PNG) Bernard Unabali and Leo Nainoka of SEEP, Fiji. Both were protectors of their people and the environment where they lived.

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Students of Te Kura Taumata o Panguru in the Far North of Aotearoa New Zealand reconnect with their ancient forest Au Warawara, through a waiata (song) lamenting past losses and looking to a restored future with hope.

The young remind us that the earth is not a possession to be squandered, but an inheritance to be handed down.

— Pope Francis, 1 September 2019



Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand

PO Box 12193

Thorndon, Wellington 6144

Aotearoa New Zealand

www.caritas.org.nz



Caritas Australia

GPO Box 9830
Sydney, NSW 2001
Australia



Caritas Fiji

35 Pratt Street
PO Box 109
Suva, Fiji



Caritas PNG

Godwit Road,
Gordons
PO Box 6576
Boroko, NCD
Papua New Guinea



Caritas Samoa

PO Box 532,
Mulivai, Apia
Samoa



Caritas Tonga

Catholic Diocese of
Tonga & Niue
PO Box 1, Vaololoa
Nuku'alofa,
Tonga