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Your Compassion in Action

Change starts with you | #1 September 2023

Emergency update

Read about our continuous emergency response and latest news from the Türkiye and Syria earthquake.

Women for the World

Meet Rosalie and the many women whose lives have been transformed with your support.

World Youth Day

Meet the students from the San Isidro Care Centre in Solomon Islands who attended World Youth Day this year.



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Cover: Rosalie poses for a portrait near her home in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo.
Photo: Arlette Bashizi/CAFOD.
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Rosalie walking with her daughter near her home in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Photo: Arlette Bashizi/CAFOD.

Words of Gratitude

Welcome to the very first edition of Your Compassion in Action – bringing you the wonderful and inspiring stories that have only been possible with your support and generosity. This September issue is particularly close to my heart, as it is dedicated to women from across the world whose lives and futures have been impacted by your support. It celebrates their achievements, as well as their incredible resilience.

Despite facing inequality and challenges such as poverty, political upheaval, and a lack of resources and opportunities, these women continue to show utmost determination to forge a path out of poverty, and to create a better future for themselves, their families and their communities. Your generosity, as well as the help of our partners, are essential in providing support to women and girls – through education, training and employment opportunities.

Over the years, you have extended your kindness to women like Tarsini from Indonesia, Aloma from the Philippines and Thandolwayo from Zimbabwe, and countless others. Your kindness has helped them gain access to education, hygiene and sanitation, training in Disaster Risk Reduction and financial stability, and it has allowed women like Rosalie to escape from a life of violence and oppression. As a result, the lives of these courageous women have been forever

changed and this would not have been possible without your support.

Your Compassion in Action also brings to you the stories of the young students from the San Isidro Care Centre in Solomon Islands who attended World Youth Day in Lisbon this year. It features emergency updates from the earthquake that struck Türkiye and Syria in February, as well as the inspiring work of the A+ Program in Malawi and Tanzania.

In September 2023, Caritas Australia will be holding its annual Women for the World campaign to raise awareness about the staggering inequality that continues to affect so many women and girls globally.

I hope that you enjoy this edition, and that you will join me in working towards a world where all women and girls can thrive and live to their full potential.



With gratitude,
Kirsty Robertson
Kirsty Robertson
Chief Executive Officer
Caritas Australia

Updates from Türkiye and Syria earthquake

In February this year, Türkiye and Syria were struck by a devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake, which led to more than 50,000 deaths and displaced thousands of families.

According to the United Nations, close to **18 million people** in Türkiye and Syria have been impacted by the disaster. The confirmed death toll stands up to **59,259 – 50,783** in Türkiye and **8,476** in Syria – making it the deadliest earthquake since the 526 Antioch earthquake in Türkiye and since the 1822 Aleppo earthquake in Syria.

With the compassionate support of people like you, our partners in both nations are working tirelessly to support those affected with:

- **Shelter:** Temporary accommodation to ensure safe and dignified care to those impacted by the earthquake dignified accomodation. Especially for children and women to ensure safety and protocols for their protection.
- **Food:** Food kits are being provided in shelters, and in areas where markets are functioning, cash or vouchers are being provided to families to purchase food.

- **Water, hygiene and sanitation:** Hygiene kits and supplies for sanitation are being distributed to prevent water-borne illnesses and the potential for secondary emergencies.
- **Psycho-social services and emotional care:** Support services, case management, counseling for adults and children, and spaces for children and others to safely meet are available.
- **Early recovery and livelihoods:** Families have lost essential income and livelihoods. Over time, CRS and partners will support households to rebuild businesses and earn income to meet basic needs.



Please donate today to our Türkiye and Syria emergency appeal to continue to provide urgent support to those still reeling from this crisis. www.caritas.org.au/turkey

Caritas partners responding to earthquake damage in Syria. Photo: Caritas Network.

You are helping women across the world thrive

women for the
+ world
Caritas Australia

Rosalie holds a box with the ice-cream she sells at her home.
Photo: Arlette Bashizi/CAFOD.

Women and girls represent half of the world's population and play a key role in improving productivity, sustainable development and economic growth here in Australia and everywhere around the world.

Unfortunately, women and girls are disproportionately affected by poverty, food insecurity, climate change, gender-based violence and abuse, as well as limited opportunities for education, health care, employment and general access to resources.

Rosalie's story

Rosalie from the Democratic Republic of Congo had a tough childhood. Her father passed away when she was just two years old, and her mother struggled to look after the family on her own. As a result, she did not have the financial security to afford school. Rosalie was just 14-years-old when she was forced to trade schoolbooks for a gun and become a child soldier.

In recent decades, the Democratic Republic of Congo has experienced ongoing political instability, violence and conflict, and the recruitment of child soldiers is all too common.

"I was in the battlefield with my baby on my back. I walked with a child in my left hand, a box of ammunition on my head and another child on my back. I also had a weapon on my right shoulder. The chief commander had no mercy on me, even though I had my baby on my back."
– Rosalie.

When Rosalie finally left the army after six years, she was eager to start a new life, free from violence. But like many ex-combatants, Rosalie found the challenge to adjust to civilian life overwhelming. With her childhood and education cut short by the war, she had missed out on developing skills that would help her to find secure employment.

With your generous help, Rosalie was able to participate in business and social skills training, supported by Caritas Australia's partners, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) and Caritas Bukavu.

Today, Rosalie is an entrepreneur and owns numerous businesses, including a second-hand shoe stall and selling ice-cream. More importantly, she has become a leader and a role model in her community, and her financial stability has allowed her to provide her children with the opportunities she did not have growing up.

Women whose lives have been transformed by your support

Aloma

Aloma's village was heavily impacted by Typhoon Santi and as a result she faced extreme financial difficulties. She has since become the treasurer of the area where she lives and is part of the Disaster Risk Reduction Council, helping manage evacuations during emergencies. Additionally, Aloma was also recognised for her leadership at an exhibition held by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the Philippines in 2022.

Laxmi

Laxmi, 16, stopped attending classes after her father died. Supported by Caritas Nepal, Laxmi was able to join a child club where was encouraged to resume her studies. Thanks to your generosity, Laxmi has become an active member of the child club, where she developed the skills and confidence to become a leader. She is now excelling in her studies and working towards her dream of becoming a civil engineer.

Martina

To escape domestic violence, Martina fled to the Uma Pas women's shelter in Timor Leste, which provided her and her eight children with accommodation, food, and referrals to other services, including health and education. She received basic financial training and learned how best to manage her money, gain economic independence and the ability to adequately provide for her children. Today, Martina is an inspiration to her community, her children are thriving, and she is running her own small business.

Tarsini

Tarsini was struggling to make a living in a rural village in Indonesia. With her husband in irregular work and a weak local economy, the couple's financial future was uncertain and they were forced to take out loans to cover their daily living expenses. With your support, and that of our partner Laz Harfa, Tarsini is debt-free. She now runs her own thriving business and is also teaching financial management to other women in her community.

Thandolwayo

At just 12 years old, Thandolwayo would walk seven kilometres each day, threatened by crocodiles, to collect contaminated water for her family. It looked like she would never realise her hope of finishing her education and becoming a nurse. Through Caritas Australia's partnership with Caritas Hwange, the community was able to install two solar-powered pumps and a 10,000-litre water tank. Today, Thandolwayo is a confident 16-year-old with the opportunity to attend high school and she is fluent in English.



Aloma working on the accounts for the DRR Committee at her home. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.



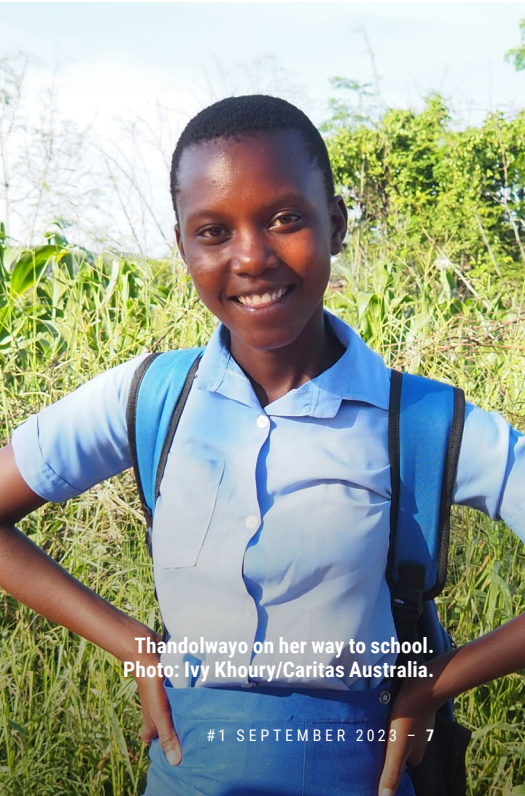
Laxmi is now an advisor at her child's club, helping nurture the next generation of young leaders. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.



Martina sitting near her home in Timor-Leste. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.



Tarsini near her home in Indonesia. Photo: Laz Harfa.



Thandolwayo on her way to school. Photo: Ivy Khoury/Caritas Australia.

The A+ Program: How you are making a difference across Malawi and Tanzania



Members of banana winemaking group in the Blantyre region, southern Malawi. Photo: Tim Lam/Caritas Australia.

It has been a difficult year for vulnerable communities in Malawi, where more than 70 percent of the population live on less than US\$2.15 a day.

The destructive Cyclone Freddy in March this year significantly impacted communities in the southern part of the country, particularly around the Blantyre region, by destroying the crops and basic service infrastructures. A widespread cholera outbreak – the deadliest in the country’s history – also led to the deaths of more than 1,700 people.

During this time, the kindness of generous people like you is essential in helping provide emergency recovery and long-term support to communities in Malawi, so that families can be healthy and resilient.

Since 2016, the A+ program has helped **7,397 families** (33,287 people) across Malawi and **3,428 families** (16,454 people) in the remote Karatu district of Tanzania.

With the support of our partners Catholic Development Commission in Malawi (CADECOM) and Diocese of Mbulu Development Department (DMDD) in Tanzania, the program helps rural communities improve their food security, access to water and sanitation, boost women’s income generation and strengthen child protection.

One of the keys to the program’s success is the emphasis on a Strengths-Based Approach (SBA). This means supporting communities to identify their own strengths, assets and capabilities to bring about a lasting change. Community members plan and lead their own social development vision while our partners help them to build their capacity so that they can forge a path out of poverty.

In one example case, this SBA was demonstrated by a women’s winemaking group in a rural village in the Blantyre region in southern Malawi. With the forging of SBA and a community-based Saving and Loan Scheme, the women utilised one of their community’s natural resources – bananas – to produce wine, which they then sold to make an income.

In addition to this banana winemaking project, CADECOM also supported the community with goats and bee-keeping initiatives to help families boost their income. Latrines and handwashing stations were also constructed to improve hygiene and sanitation within the community and reduce the spread of diseases.

The program will soon enter a new phase – the A+ Successor program – and will help **10,184 families** (56,096 people) over the next five years across Malawi and **5,993 families** (19,967 people) in Tanzania. The program will have a strong focus on school children and maternal health clinics in Tanzania as well as improving food security in vulnerable rural communities in Malawi.

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

The A+ program supported the construction of a child care centre in this rural village in Malawi. Photo: Tim Lam/Caritas Australia.





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San Isidro Care Center students to attend World Youth Day in Lisbon

Four program participants from the San Isidro Care Center – a rural training center that caters to hearing-impaired students in the Solomon Islands, were selected to attend World Youth Day (WYD) 2023 in Lisbon, Portugal.

WYD is a worldwide encounter with the Pope celebrated every three years. It is a great opportunity for young people to celebrate their faith and personally experience the universality of the Catholic Church.

Amongst the four students selected to attend was Emmanuel.

Emmanuel, 23, grew up in the Malaita province with his father – a teacher and mechanic, his mother and his two siblings who study in Honiara.

With your generous support, and with the help of our partner, San Isidro Care Center, Emmanuel has been able to overcome the barriers of living with a hearing impairment and has learned the necessary skills, including sign language, to gain greater employment opportunities.



World Youth Day group from San Isidro Care Center. Photo: Caritas Australia Solomon Islands.

As the head boy of the school, he was selected by his very own classmates to attend WYD and he was very excited to see the world and meet new people.

In October, he will finish his four-year stint at the rural training centre and he is looking forward to pursuing construction-related work using the skills he learned at San Isidro.

Along with your generosity, the San Isidro Care Centre has been supported by Caritas Australia Solomon Islands for over five years. The training centre has helped hundreds of people with a hearing impairment gain new skills, learn sign language and create better futures for themselves.

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Millions in need of acute humanitarian assistance in Sudan

A large-scale humanitarian crisis is unfolding in Sudan. The north African country is now seeing millions of its own citizens forced to flee their homes.

Armed conflict began in April this year and continues to spread violence across the nation.

- 24.7 million people are in need of acute humanitarian assistance.
- 3 million people have been forced to flee their homes.

Millions of people have been displaced within Sudan and to surrounding countries, as they flee violent conflict. This has resulted in already scarce resources being pushed beyond breaking point, with urgent aid desperately needed to prevent the spread of hunger, disease and further violence.

People are in need of access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, shelter, food and medical supplies.

Over 1,100 people have been killed and 12,000 injured as a result of the fighting with a further 3 million forced to flee their homes.

Over 368,000 children have been forced from their homes, with the crisis predominantly affecting women and children.

Additionally, there has been an alarming increase in reports of sexual assault across the country, and these numbers are only going to rise as the crisis spreads.

Our partner, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), and local partners SOS Sahel and Emergency

Relief Rehabilitation and Development Agency (ERRADA) are focusing on bringing access to clean water, hygiene and sanitation support, shelter and other direct assistance needs to those affected by the crisis.

Your generous support can make a world of difference and can be used by our partners to respond quickly to the growing humanitarian needs in Sudan and in neighbouring countries.



Refugees in Sudan. Photo: Shutterstock.



Women for the World Gala Dinner

This year marks 10 years of Women for the World and we would like to take this opportunity to invite you to be a part of Caritas Australia's Gala Dinner in Sydney.

The event will be held on Wednesday 1 November 2023 between 6 pm and 10.30 pm at Doltone House, Hyde Park, in Sydney. We encourage you to save this date and hope to see you there.

Funds raised at this event will help provide education, develop livelihoods, improve healthcare, reduce infant mortality and address gender-based issues for women across Asia, Africa, the Pacific and with First Nations communities here in Australia.

Guests will enjoy a night hearing from Kirsty Robertson, CEO of Caritas Australia and keynote speaker, Babita Pinto, the Head of Programs at Caritas India. They will share the inspiring stories of resilient women who have gained the skills necessary to overcome systemic disadvantage and poverty.

Together we can continue to empower women living in poverty and provide them with the support they need to build better lives for themselves, their families and their communities.

 **For more information, please visit:**
<https://www.caritas-women-for-the-world-gala.com>

Meet Roslyn Kuniata



Roslyn Kuniata is Caritas Australia's Papua New Guinea-based Program Quality and Operations Manager.

Since 2016, Roslyn has worn many hats across the organisation and they have all presented their own different challenges as well as a lot of excitement.

"I get to work with these incredible people, who are having an impact in the lives of vulnerable people. Their work inspires me to advocate for them whenever I have the opportunity to speak. Their story of achievement and success is also my story."

One of the highlights of Roslyn's time at Caritas Australia has been a trip to Kavieng – an island province in Papua New Guinea. She recalled travelling with a Catholic Church Health Services consultant to conduct a health assessment. They visited the Lemakot Health Center, which was an hour drive out from the main town.

"As the vehicle stopped, I looked out and saw this old building and lots of people sitting around the area. This was the Lemakot Health center. As the officer in charge walked us through the whole building, I felt so emotional, seeing patients sleeping on old mattresses, most of the medical equipment was not functional and most of the

wards were run down. There was no water running so patients or their guardians had to fetch bucket of water from a nearby bore well." Roslyn recalled.

"But amid all these issues, we met a few of the nurses all really smiling at us and attending to the patients. Making use of whatever resources they had to help the people. Every day is a struggle for them, but they put on a smile and come to work."

Another one of Roslyn's passions is protecting the safety for the women and girls in Papua New Guinea and in the world. She would like to see a world where there is no violence targeting women and girls, and where no lives are lost as a result.

We would love to hear your stories of compassion!

If you would like to nominate someone from your school or Parish community to be featured in the next edition of Your Compassion in Action 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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