

# SHANIELLA'S STORY

## SOLOMON ISLANDS



[Watch Shaniella's Story on Vimeo](#)



Shaniella, 23, grew up with her family in a village in the Solomon Islands' southern Makira province.

She studied until grade 11 at a local school but was unable to complete her final year, as she did not pass the exam required by the Solomon Island's education system to enter grade 12. With the poverty rate in Makira province at around 32 percent<sup>1</sup>, she knew that without relevant job skills, she would struggle to earn a living.

Girls' and women's participation in secondary education, training and employment in the Solomon Islands is significantly lower compared to male students<sup>2</sup>. Limited opportunities in remote areas, few live-in facilities at colleges away from home and community attitudes relating to the traditional roles of women, all contribute to their lower participation rates<sup>3</sup>.

**Shaniella is seen in a classroom at her Rural Training Centre near the capital Honiara, Solomon Islands.** Photo: Neil Nuia

In 2020, Shaniella decided to move away from home to study at a Rural Training Centre outside the capital, Honiara. The vocational school is supported by Caritas Australia Solomon Islands (CASI), through the Happy, Healthy, Holistic Community Development program.

Shaniella chose to study hospitality and tourism, in addition to compulsory subjects, like life skills, cooking, sewing and agricultural production.

However, the school is in a particularly disaster-prone area of the Solomon Islands. Not long after Shaniella started, the school was hit by a landslide, flooding, and a cyclone, all in quick succession.

"I was in school that time when the landslide occurred," Shaniella says. "I was devastated because I had no knowledge of what to do and where to get information. I saw students in the school panic. It was a bad experience for me, especially because I am here, leaving my family at home in another island."

<sup>1</sup>[Solomon Islands Government](#) <sup>2</sup> [UNESCO](#) / [World Bank](#) <sup>3</sup> [World Bank](#)

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The landslide destroyed the school's main source of water, a gravity-fed system, and it also damaged school buildings and devastated the garden which the school relies on for food.

Caritas Australia Solomon Islands (CASI) was able to help the school to install eight water tanks. This restored students' access to clean drinking water and the ablution block. The tanks also supply water to nearby schools, health centres and the wider community. CASI then supported the school by providing it with improved planting materials, 200 chickens, and training in agricultural skills and poultry management, to help it to boost its food security.

To ensure that the school is better prepared to respond to future disasters, CASI also ran Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) training workshops, raising awareness about risks in the school's environment, evacuation procedures and how to respond during an emergency. It provided additional support when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, by helping the school to improve hygiene practices to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Around 80 students, teachers and community members have directly benefitted from this program so far, with around 2000 people benefitting indirectly.

Now, Shaniella can complete her job skills training, with enough water and food to eat, as well as better hygiene and sanitation. She is improving her ability to earn an income, learning skills which will expand her job opportunities. The school community has increased and diversified its crop supply and its number of poultry has quadrupled. Students are also better prepared to respond when disaster strikes.

Although the Solomon Islands has largely avoided the worst of COVID-19, the economic impacts on tourism will continue to significantly impact the country for the immediate future. However, Shaniella is confident that she is well-positioned to take her place in the hospitality industry, when the opportunity arises.

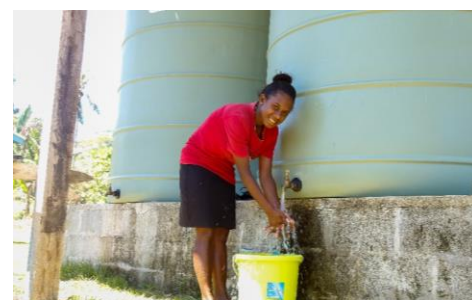
"I would like to thank you for your continued support for the school and community when they were in need," says Shaniella.

Through supporting Caritas Australia you are helping young people in the Solomon Islands to build bright futures for themselves - and for future generations.

Along with your generous support, this program is supported by the Australian Government, through the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP).



Photo: Neil Nuia





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### A CATHOLIC WORLDVIEW (JUDGE)

*Yet access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity.*

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* n30

- How is Caritas working to uphold the dignity of Shaniella and her community?
- Severe weather events caused by climate change are having devastating impacts on already vulnerable communities. Explain how caring for the environment is also caring for each other for all future generations.

### FAITH IN ACTION (ACT)

*"When we speak of the need to care for our common home, our planet, we appeal to that spark of universal consciousness and mutual concern that may still be present in people's hearts. Those who enjoy a surplus of water yet choose to conserve it for the sake of the greater human family have attained a moral stature that allows them to look beyond themselves and the group to which they belong. How marvellously human! The same attitude is demanded if we are to recognize the rights of all people, even those born beyond our own borders."*

Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* n117

Think about the link between the environment, climate change, drinking water and food security around the world. When we care for the environment, our common home, we are also caring for each other.

No doubt you are already doing many things to care for our common home. Can you commit to one more action? Share your commitment with friends and family and encourage them to take action too!

- I will take even better care of our common home by...