

Oliva, Tanzania



[Watch Oliva's film](#)

Growing up in Tanzania, twenty-two-year-old Oliva did not have the opportunity to go to school. She was embarrassed that she couldn't read, write or count. Her small business was losing money because customers were taking advantage of her. Then Oliva enrolled in literacy and numeracy classes, as part of Caritas Australia's A+ program.



While she was still learning herself, she decided to set up a classroom in her home, to share her knowledge, free of charge, with other adults who were too shy to attend public classes. Now, she has graduated, attendance at her home-based classes is growing, her business is thriving, and she is fulfilling her dream of becoming a pastor.

Oliva lives in the northern region of Tanzania with her farmer husband and four children, two sons, aged seven and two, as well as an adopted niece and nephew, aged 12 and 21, who have lived with them for the past seven years.

Oliva runs a kiosk, selling grocery products and serving tea and snacks. She also works as a casual labourer on local onion farms.

"Due to low family income, my parents could not send me to school," Oliva says. "My mother preferred that I take work as a labourer. When I went to church and the pastor said, "Let us open our bible and read", I could not read even a single word."

Around 25 percent of Tanzanian girls and women over 15 years cannot read or write. Many families are unable to afford school fees or uniforms. Schools are often a long way from home, limited in resources, with few teachers willing to work in remote rural areas.

Household chores are often the responsibility of women in Tanzania, they participate in few activities outside the home and have limited decision-making powers within their family and community.

Three years ago, Oliva attended a village meeting about the A+ Program, run by Caritas Australia with local partner, Diocese of Mbulu Development Department (DMDD). As part of the program, Oliva attended Caritas Australia-supported literacy classes in the village. She noticed that other women were interested in the classes – but were too shy and embarrassed to join. She set up a classroom in her house and started sharing her knowledge with her neighbours.

Oliva has graduated and attendance at her classes is growing. Her children are now able to learn in the village, instead of travelling seven kilometres to school.

Oliva says, "My business is growing because I can keep good financial records and save and buy basic needs like food, medicine and farm materials."

Caritas Australia has also helped the community to improve access to safe drinking water, increase livestock production and improve toilets in several primary schools. Around 2500 people have benefitted from this program so far.

Oliva aspires to 'Be More' and wants to help her community to achieve its vision of a better life for all.

"I'm now the women's chairperson at the church and I want to be a pastor. I will also contest for a leadership position in the next village council election so that I can represent my community," Oliva says.

"I am proud to be a teacher who helps others to achieve their dream. I would like to thank Caritas Australia for your support toward fulfilment of our community vision, may God bless you all."

Source: [World Bank](#)

Learning Tasks



Task 1: Discuss

- In what ways has Caritas Australia helped Oliva and her family?
- What challenges did Oliva face?
- What skills has Oliva learnt?
- What might Oliva's life be like without these skills?
- List the things that you would not be able to do if you weren't at school.
- Name one thing you learnt after reading this story.
- How is Oliva's life different since her training?
- How might her children's lives be different to her own?
- How might the lives of the women Oliva teaches be different in the future?

Curriculum: English Year 5: ACELY1703 Year 6: ACELY1713, HASS Year 6: ACHASSK141

Task 2: The Ripple Effect

Find a bucket or larger container of water you can drop a stone into. Even better, if your school has some water nearby visit this water source.

Drop or throw a stone into the water. What happens? Carefully watch what happens after the stone has disappeared below the surface. What would happen if many people threw stones into the water at the same time?

The continuing or spreading results of an action or event is known as the 'ripple effect'. The stone in the water demonstrates this well.

What would happen if those 'stones' were kind deeds?

Is there a way that your class could start a ripple effect in your school community? Brainstorm some ideas and choose one or more to carry out, spreading kindness as you go.

Task 2: Deep Dive

- Discuss what you think you have to do to become a teacher.
- Brainstorm some of the things you have to learn or have.
- Think about what Oliva did. What challenges might she have faced as she became a teacher?
- Look at the picture of Oliva teaching her class. How is her classroom different to yours?
- What makes a classroom a classroom? Is it the building or is it something more?
- Is there something you could teach others?

What would it be?

- Have a go at teaching something you have learnt to others. Was it difficult or easy? What made it that way?
- St Mary of the Cross MacKillop once said "Never see a need without doing something about it." What needs are there in your community that you can do something about?
- Write a letter to the principal or someone in your school about what you have discovered and what you could do about it.

Task 3: Thrills and Spills

What is one thing that excited you about this story? What is one thing that made you sad about this story?

How can you celebrate and share the excitement or thrill with others?

What might you be able to do about the thing that made you sad (spill)?

Task 4: Catholic Social Teaching

Oliva's story demonstrates the Catholic Social Teaching, the Common Good. In what ways can we as a class work for the common good? Has your ripple effect project created something for the common good? Explain how.

Task 5: RE Link

Oliva has challenged herself by going above and beyond what was expected of her.

How can we go above and beyond to bring about the message of Jesus in our school community?