

## **Caritas Australia reflects on the global significance of the Church as Pope visits Asia and Oceania.**

Pope Francis is set to visit Indonesia, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea during a month-long apostolic journey, beginning in Indonesia on September 3<sup>rd</sup>.

These countries are home to programs supported by Caritas Australia, the aid and development agency of the Catholic Church, as well as millions of Catholics. In Indonesia 8.3 million Catholics make up around 3 percent of the population, while in Papua New Guinea two million Catholics amount to a quarter of the population. In Timor-Leste, an astounding 97 percent of its 1.3m people are Catholic.

According to the [Pew Research centre](#) the Catholic Church provides around 25 percent of all healthcare globally, with this rising to 40 percent in some developing and rural areas. Church networks have also provided education, shelter, and guidance to all of those in need, regardless of their faith.

Caritas Australia supports locally led initiatives across 36 countries, through which 760,000 people in need were supported around the world last year. Caritas Australia is part of the Caritas Internationalis confederation of over 160 members who are working at the grassroots in most countries across the world.

**Dan Skehan Programs Director at Caritas Australia** said of the Pope's visit, "At Caritas Australia we are uniquely privileged to spend our time visiting many communities supported by the generosity of Catholics. We are always overwhelmed by how warmly we are welcomed, as people of all backgrounds whole heartedly recognise the enduring support of the Church in supporting communities to lift themselves out of poverty."

"A visit from the His Holiness Pope Francis will act as a striking symbol of hope, and undoubtedly be a vibrant celebration of all we've achieved as a global family, and all that we can achieve through continued compassion and partnership" he concluded.

Caritas Australia supports development programs across the Asia Pacific region. In Papua New Guinea, this includes a partnership with Catholic Church Health Services (CCHS) sees outdated facilities being upgraded with clean running water and off grid electricity installed, improving health outcomes for those living in rural areas.

In Timor-Leste, one initiative supported by Caritas Australia is a Protection Program that includes shelters for women fleeing violence, practical support for survivors such as savings and loans and small businesses training, and training in gender-based violence prevention.

In Indonesia Caritas Australia, supports the Laz Harfa Economic & Health Development Project among others, which aims to help vulnerable families increase their income and become economically resilient. It also helps families stay healthy through initiatives such as improved access to safe drinking water and latrines.

To support Caritas Australia, visit <http://www.caritas.org.au/donate> or call 1800 024 413 toll free.

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