

ESC Annual Report

Phase II

2024-25 Year 1



Director's foreword



“

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

1 Corinthians 13:13

Front cover: CAFOD's partner, Caritas Lebanon, has been responding to the urgent needs of displaced people since day one of the escalation of conflict in Lebanon, distributing hot meals, essential supplies, and operating mobile clinics to distribute medicines and provide medical services.

Over the past year, it has been impossible to ignore the suffering unfolding across our world. From devastating wars to escalating natural disasters, millions of lives have been turned upside down – many of them in crises that barely make the headlines. Like many of you, I've watched the news with a heavy heart, asking: what can we do?

At CAFOD, we are doing what we do best, responding with urgency, compassion and a deep-rooted faith. Through our trusted local partners, we act quickly, often within hours, offering not only life-saving aid but also a presence of solidarity, dignity, and hope in the darkest moments.

This report is a testament to that response; a reflection on how solidarity becomes real through action.

Last year marked the second phase of *Every Second Counts*, launched in response to the growing number of emergencies affecting communities worldwide – many of which go unnoticed. Whether confronting conflict, climate disaster, or forced displacement, communities are enduring crisis after crisis, with little time to recover.

Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of our supporters, we have been able to stand alongside our local partners and the communities they serve as they **prepare** for, **survive** from, and **rebuild** after a crisis. But the challenges are intensifying. We need to continue to take action together.

As disasters become more frequent, and complex, the need for swift, coordinated, and sustained response has never been greater. Together with our local partners and the church network we don't just respond to high-profile disasters, but also to the many protracted and underreported crises that silently devastate lives around the world, ensuring that aid is not only immediate but lasting, with the aim to build a better world.

Since its launch in 2020, *Every Second Counts* has responded to overlapping global emergencies – from climate shocks and COVID-19 to conflict in Ukraine and the Middle East. We have seen how deeply interconnected our world is and how it takes all of us to help those most vulnerable.

Our work has also been made more difficult by the recent, widely reported cuts to global overseas aid. These reductions have significantly impacted our partners' ability to work with communities living through a crisis, and at CAFOD we are ensuring we continue to uphold the dignity and safety of our sisters and brothers.

Yet, even in this climate, CAFOD remains uniquely positioned to respond.

We are proud to be part of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) – the UK's most coordinated response alliance and a member of Caritas Internationalis, the global humanitarian network of the Catholic Church,

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Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

James 2:15–17

with a presence in 165 countries and territories.. Together, Caritas agencies form one of the largest aid networks in the world.

It takes all of us to act quickly and make a real difference. Over the past five years, *Every Second Counts* has raised an incredible £6.5 million. This has enabled CAFOD to deliver 145 emergency response projects, reaching thousands of people in moments of greatest need. In the last three years the projects supported by ESC have reached over 700,000 people and in the last financial year alone, we raised £1.6 million, responding to crises in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Afghanistan and the Middle East. Thanks to this support, our partners have delivered urgent essential aid including food, clean water, shelter, hygiene supplies and helped communities build resilience for the future.

In 2025, over 305 million* people are in need of humanitarian assistance due to conflict, disaster and climate shocks. That’s 1 in 27 people worldwide, the highest number in modern history. **We must act now.**

Every Second Counts isn’t just a fund – it is a lifeline. Your donations enable our local experts to act within hours of a crisis, providing life-saving support before international appeals are launched. This speed, grounded in trust and long-standing relationships, is only possible thanks to the ongoing generosity of our supporters.

I hope that this report offers you inspiration, hope, and reminds you that behind every headline is a network of care and solidarity.

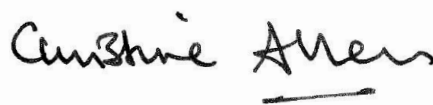
Thank you

To all who have supported *Every Second Counts*: thank you. Your compassion has provided life-saving support, restored dignity, and offered hope when it was needed most.

But the need is growing, and so must our response.

In a world where headlines move on but suffering lingers, your continued support ensures we work together with those in urgent need. Your generosity fuels action and when every second counts we must get life-saving aid to those who need it most, before it’s too late.

Please, give today. Because in the face of disaster your compassion is powerful, and your kindness provides life-saving help.



Christine Allen, CAFOD Director

*OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2024

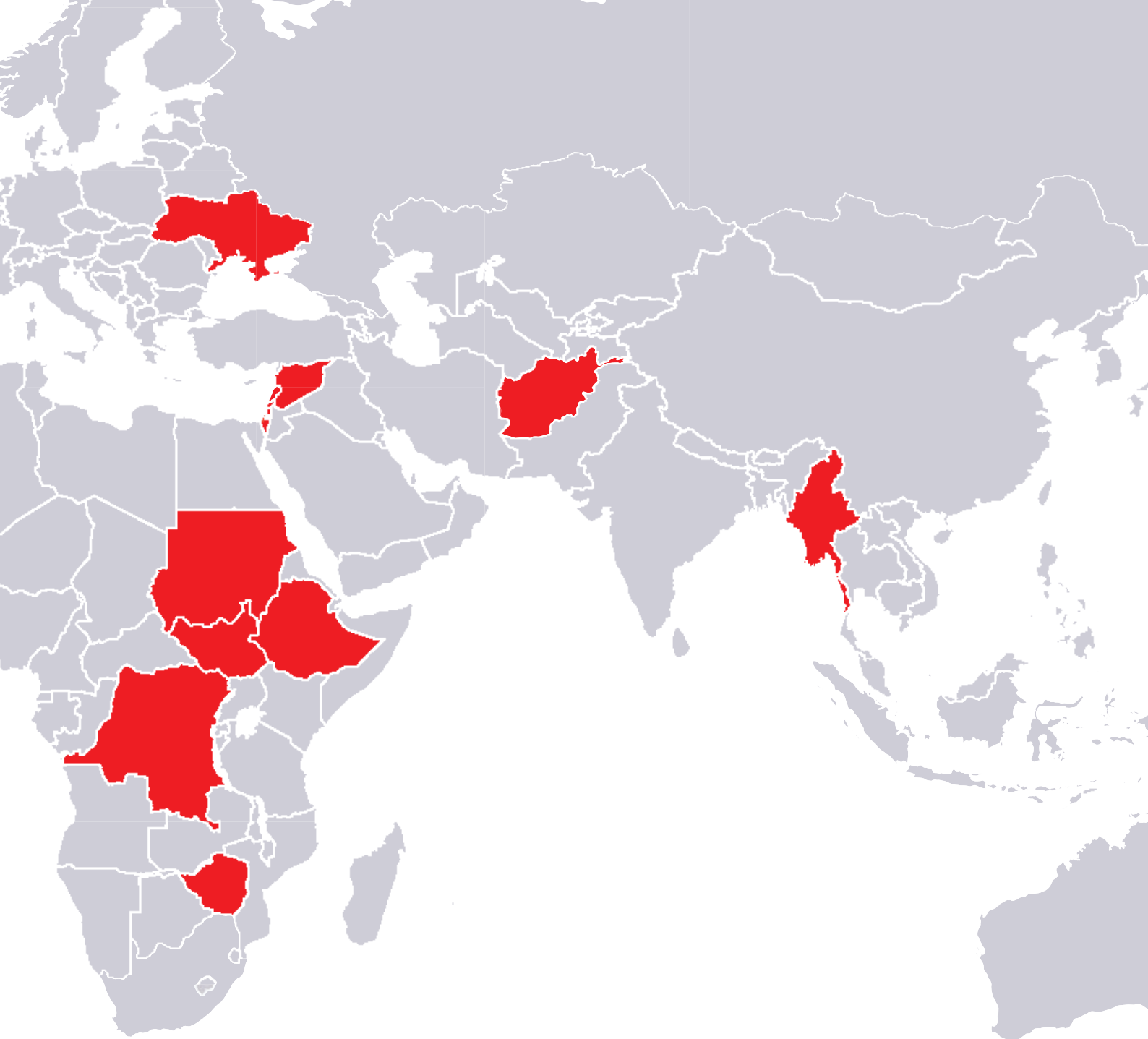


Shared action, local impact

41 projects
19 countries

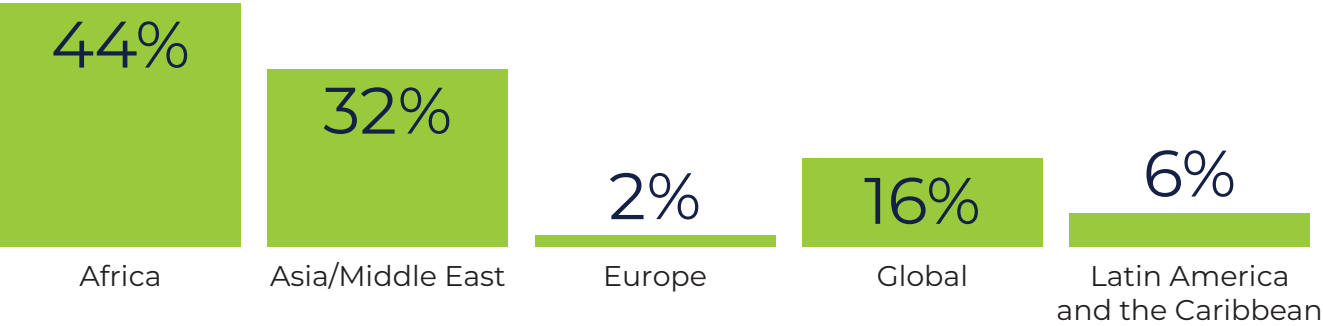
Through our network of partners and our experienced humanitarian teams, CAFOD has both the reach, expertise, and ability to be alongside communities when they most need it.

Your generous support to *Every Second Counts* this past year has meant that we have been able to support 41 projects in 19 countries.



NB Due to confidentiality some countries are not disclosed

Percentage of this year's ESC funding spread across the regions:



Underlying drivers of humanitarian crises

In order to respond effectively to emergencies, we must first understand what drives them. This section explores the complex and interlinked factors such as conflict, climate change, and economic instability, that force millions into crisis each year. Recognising these underlying causes not only helps explain the scale of humanitarian need, but also informs how CAFOD responds with compassion, urgency, and long-term vision. By addressing root causes alongside immediate needs, we work toward lasting change and resilience for the world's most vulnerable communities.



“

At the heart of conflict, there are people like you and me fighting to survive.”

Ibrahim Njuguna,
CAFOD's head of
humanitarian

Armed conflict

Conflicts remain the primary driver of displacement and humanitarian need. Civil wars and regional conflicts, often with international involvement, have prolonged suffering and complicated peace efforts. The impact of protracted crises is far reaching. More than 78 million children and young people in war-torn and crisis-stricken areas are out of school.*

*UNOCHA Global Humanitarian Overview

Climate change

Extreme weather events such as floods, droughts and hurricanes are increasing in frequency and severity, displacing communities and destroying livelihoods, especially in climate-vulnerable regions.

For example, in 2023 Guatemala was identified as being at very high risk of being affected by El Niño. El Niño typically has a damaging effect on agricultural livelihoods and food security, leading to significant human suffering and economic loss. The 2015-16 El Niño episode severely affected over 60 million people, causing 23 countries to appeal for international humanitarian assistance totalling \$5 billion. However, the impact of El Niño has been mitigated in cases where governments and communities have the tools, training, and knowledge to prepare for extreme weather events.

Funding from *Every Second Counts* enabled us to support our partner Asociacion Unidos Por La Vida to equip essential shelters and provide training for community leaders on shelter management.

Economic instability

Global inflation, food price volatility, and economic sanctions have contributed to widespread poverty and hunger, particularly in fragile states.

Governance failures

Authoritarianism, corruption, and weak institutions hinder crisis response and recovery. Political instability often prevents effective coordination and delivery of humanitarian aid.

Humanitarian access and challenges



Security risks
to aid workers
and civilians



Funding shortfalls,
meaning there
is significantly
less funding for
overseas aid



Political interference in
aid distribution



Limited logistical access in
conflict zones
or disaster-
affected areas

“

Our staff in Gaza are facing human and personal tragedy and suffering every day. Yet their extreme resilience and commitment enable them to help and support people in great distress around them. Their strength stands as a quiet act of resistance and humanity.”

Caritas Jerusalem,
CAFOD partner

Right: Caritas Jerusalem, in partnership with CAFOD, are running medical units which provide mobile medical units and psychological support.



How does CAFOD respond in a crisis?

“

Peace is built on the foundation of justice.”

Pope Leo XIV

- **Localisation:** Supporting local experts who are often first responders when an emergency hits through strengthening their capacity to face crises of varying degrees, before, during and after they hit.
- **Anticipating and preparing for emergencies:** Strengthening early warning systems and crisis prevention mechanisms which reduces the impact and risk for future crises.
- **Respond quickly:** We are able to get real time updates and immediate assessment of an emergency through our network of local partners so that we can support communities as soon as a crisis hits.
- **Flexible funding:** *Every Second Counts* funding is readily available to be used as needed throughout the year as soon as a crisis happens, without needing to wait for fundraising to happen here in the UK.
- **Cash-based aid:** Increasing use of direct financial support to communities impacted by disasters, ensuring they have autonomy and dignity.
- **Climate resilience:** Integration of disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation strategies for example in flood affected areas ensure projects are resilient to these shocks so stand the test of time.
- **Long-term development:** Ensure we are there long after the dust has settled to help communities recover and rebuild alongside emergency relief.

Right: Our partner DePaul Ukraine's soup kitchens serve around 500 meals per day, providing healthy meals in and around Ukraine.



Below: In South Sudan, CAFOD is providing life-saving clean water and emergency toilets for families in a refugee camp.



Prepare



Livelihoods response to refugees in South Sudan

The war in Sudan has forced over **11.4 million people from their homes**, with more than **3 million refugees** fleeing into neighbouring countries. In South Sudan, camps along the White Nile are now stretched to their limits, hosting four times their intended capacity and receiving 1,000 new arrivals daily.

Climate change is compounding the ongoing crisis in Sudan. During the last rainy season, devastating floods destroyed homes and farmland, triggering a surge in waterborne diseases such as cholera. Cholera outbreaks have intensified in areas recently captured by the Sudanese Armed Forces, prompting voluntary returns of internally displaced people to locations like Khartoum where 80 per cent of water systems aren't working due to targeted attacks on power infrastructure. The disease is now spreading to other states, including conflict-affected regions in Darfur. Over 7,000 cases of cholera have been reported in May 2025 – an increase of almost 400 per cent compared to April 2025*.

Meanwhile, food insecurity is reaching catastrophic levels. In 2024 alone, **750,000 people** in Sudan faced **extreme hunger**, and the threat of widespread acute food insecurity continues to grow.

Yet amid this unfolding emergency, efforts are not only focused on immediate survival – they're also geared toward helping communities prepare for the crises of tomorrow.



As Sudan teeters on the edge of one of the biggest, yet avoidable, humanitarian crises in living memory, it is imperative that the global community unite to provide assistance and support to those in need."

Telley Sadia, CAFOD's country representative for Sudan.



*Relief WEB/OCHA

Compounding crisis: From relief to resilience

Through *Every Second Counts* Funding we have been able to provide over **£350,000** across Sudan and South Sudan in the last year alone. Through this and CAFOD's humanitarian response in South Sudan we have been able to reach:

- **165,150 people** with emergency food, clean water, cash assistance, and refugee support
- **300,000 people** with critical healthcare to curb the spread of disease

But the long-term outlook requires more than aid. It demands adaptive, sustainable solutions that allow displaced communities to rebuild with resilience.

Preparing for future shocks through innovative farming

In South Sudan, we are going beyond emergency aid to help displaced communities build resilience and reclaim dignity. One key ongoing initiative is the creation of floating gardens which have been designed to withstand the uncertainties of conflict and climate change. They are:

- **Climate-resilient:** These mobile gardens float on floodwaters, providing a stable food source even when land is submerged
- **Adaptable and portable:** Easily moved and replicated, making them ideal for displaced communities on the move
- **Promote food security:** Enables cultivation of vegetables in areas with poor or submerged soil
- **Boosts self-reliance:** They provide fresh vegetables and a sense of control, even in uncertain conditions

These gardens represent a low-cost, high-impact solution that meets urgent nutritional needs while preparing communities for future shocks, be they environmental or conflict-driven. Thank you for making this possible through your kind donations to *Every Second Counts*.

Below: Floating gardens, woven from aquatic plants, rise with water levels, protecting crops from floods.

Opposite: With overcrowding and limited facilities, refugee camps in Sudan are especially vulnerable to sanitation crises. CAFOD and our partners are responding by delivering safe drinking water and toilets.



Survive



Above: Myanmar has been struck by a powerful earthquake. Over 3,700 people have died and many more have been impacted. Through the Catholic Church, we can provide the emergency help that affected families will need – food, water and shelter.

“

We hear reports of people rummaging through garbage for food and of children who die from malnutrition and hunger. Access to clean water, or any water, is nearly impossible in some areas... the impact on health and hygiene is severe.”

CAFOD partner in Gaza describes the dire situation

Myanmar earthquake

As of June 2025, Myanmar remains embroiled in a multifaceted crisis marked by ongoing civil conflict, humanitarian emergencies, and escalating repression under the military junta that seized power in February 2021.

On 28 March a 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck Myanmar. The impact of the earthquake was catastrophic, killing over 3,700 people and leaving over 5,000 injured. The epicentre was in an area already impacted by conflict, compounding the already challenging humanitarian situation there. Millions were left in urgent need of shelter, food, clean water, and medical care.

Through the Catholic Church, we continue to provide the emergency help that affected families need – **food, water, shelter and emergency cash distribution.**

Gaza

The conflict in Gaza is causing unbearable suffering to Palestinian civilians and massive damage to civilian infrastructure. As of 4 June, at least 54,607 Palestinians have been killed and 125,341 Palestinians injured since 7 October 2023.

Israel's blockade on virtually all humanitarian aid and commercial supplies entering Gaza, coupled with the intense scale of the military operations, has left 2.1 million people facing high levels of food insecurity. Access to food and safe drinking water is rapidly diminishing.

2024 was the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since UN records began in 2005. Military raids, settler attacks, and home demolitions continue to escalate, while severe movement restrictions, including roadblocks and checkpoints, are further isolating communities and limiting access to essential services. According to OCHA, since 2023, over 3,500 structures have been demolished in the West Bank, affecting over 600,000 people and over 41,000 Palestinians have been displaced since January 2024.

What is CAFOD doing?

Our local partners have shown extraordinary resilience and unwavering commitment to their work for more than 18 months of crisis and they continue to support communities in desperate need.

Below: Gaza is at breaking point. Aaliyah and her daughter sit on the remains of a damaged building in southern Gaza.



Below: CAFOD's partner, Caritas Lebanon, has been responding to the urgent needs of displaced people since day one of the escalation of conflict in Lebanon, distributing hot meals, essential supplies, and operating mobile clinics to distribute medicines and provide medical services.





Families in Gaza are starving whilst lifesaving food remains blocked at the border. Every hour of delay costs lives.”

Elizabeth Funnell,
CAFOD's country
programme
representative for
the Middle East

We continue to support our partners in Gaza prioritising emergency healthcare, mental health support, safe shelter, hot meals, hygiene kits, and cash assistance to families displaced by violence.

In the West Bank, CAFOD supported one of our partners with £30,000 to provide emergency legal aid to Palestinians facing the demolition of homes and property, land evictions, forced displacement, movement restrictions and settler violence. Our partner continues to provide legal representation, legal consultations and raise awareness of people's legal and human rights.

Syria and Lebanon

In January 2024 severe winter storms in Syria and Lebanon left thousands of people homeless and exposed to the freezing winter weather. In Syria, the storms flooded areas where tens of thousands of displaced people live in makeshift shelters. They have no access to heating, clean water or other basic necessities. In Lebanon, Syrian refugees living in informal settlements were displaced, many for the second or even third time as the settlements flooded and tents were destroyed.

Since the storms CAFOD has provided ongoing support through our partners thanks to donations to *Every Second Counts*, delivering essential support such as:



I renew my appeal to the leaders: ceasefire, release all hostages, fully respect humanitarian law. Mary Queen of Peace, pray for us.”

Pope Leo XIV



Tarpaulins



Mattresses



Blankets



Hygiene kits



Heating materials

Rebuild



Supporting migrants in Latin America

Since 2020, increasing numbers of people across Latin America have been forced to flee their homes, driven by violence, poverty, political instability, and the growing impacts of climate change. Many journey through the dangerous Northern Triangle or the treacherous Darién Gap, across the border of Colombia and Panama, where over **300,000 crossed in 2024** alone. While most are from Latin America, around 10 per cent come from Africa and Asia, underscoring the global scale of this crisis.

Communities in Central America's "Dry Corridor" are on the frontlines of climate change, with failed harvests pushing families into hunger and desperation. At the same time, violence and gang control continue to displace thousands. Women and children face the highest risks, often subjected to sexual violence and exploitation along the way.

With tightening borders and reduced international aid, many migrants find themselves stranded in overcrowded shelters, without basic services or legal protection. Mental health issues, especially among women and girls, are growing rapidly, with many experiencing trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).



"The most important support I have received is psychological support. Anybody can give you a plate of food, but not a friendly hand. They have been friends to me."

Ana and her 5-year-old daughter received emergency shelter and vital psychological support from CAFOD and our partners.

Our response: Providing hope, dignity, and life-saving support

Thanks to support from *Every Second Counts*, CAFOD has provided over **£90,000** to our local partners across Latin America in the last year supporting various projects. As part of this we have been able to provide **£31,496** to our regional partner, the Migrant Jesuit Network, to respond across key points along the migration route – Panama, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

Together, we supported at least **7,700 migrants**, with a focus on women and girls, offering:

- **Safe spaces** to rest, wash, eat, and recover, restoring a sense of dignity and humanity
- **Psychological support** and mental health care to help heal trauma
- **Legal guidance** on asylum, refugee rights, and referrals to specialist services
- **Essential supplies**, including food, clothing, and hygiene kits tailored for men and women
- **Emergency cash assistance** for 500 of the most vulnerable families, helping them afford food, transport, medicine, and child support



Above: With emergency shelter and psychological support from CAFOD's partner Migrant Jesuit Network, Ana is rebuilding her life.

In the face of immense hardship, our work helped restore hope, agency, and safety to thousands of people. These are not just numbers. They are families, mothers, children, and individuals who have since felt seen, protected, and supported.

One of these amazing women is Ana. She began her journey from Venezuela with her 5-year-old daughter, driven by the hope of asylum and a safer future. On foot, they crossed nine countries, facing hunger, exhaustion, and constant danger. One of the most terrifying moments came in the Darién Gap, a lawless stretch of jungle between Colombia and Panama, where they were surrounded by armed groups. Ana lived in constant fear for her daughter's life.

In Nicaragua, she was assaulted and robbed of everything. With no money left, Ana survived by **selling sweets and cleaning homes** in each country they passed, just to feed her child and keep moving. When they finally reached the US-Mexico border, her hopes were crushed: asylum was no longer an option.

Now pregnant with her second child, Ana has chosen to rebuild her life in Guatemala. With support from our partner Migrant Jesuit Network, she found shelter at Casa Myrna Mack in Guatemala City. There, she's received the support she needs to start again with safety, dignity, and hope.

Ana dreams of becoming a professional makeup artist and is determined to give her children the stable future she never had.

Distribution of funds by country

This year a total of £1,624,312 was raised through Every Second Counts.

Region	Number of projects	Total ESC grants for 2024-2025	Percentage of ESC funding per region
Africa	17	£715,222	44%
Asia/Middle East	15	£526,642	32%
Europe	1	£25,000	2%
Global	5	£266,111	16%
Latin America and Caribbean	3	£91,337	6%
	41	£1,624,312	

Region	Country	Emergency	Total contributed via ESC
Africa	Democratic Republic of Congo	Emergency response and conflict	£161,488
Africa	Ethiopia	Emergency preparedness	£30,000
Africa	Liberia	Flood response	£50,000
Africa	South Sudan	Conflict	£317,842
Africa	Sudan	Conflict	£34,000
Africa	Zimbabwe	Emergency preparedness and women empowerment	£4,450

Asia/Middle East	Afghanistan	Flood response	£7,551
Asia/Middle East	Myanmar	Earthquake response	£95,220
Asia/Middle East	Israel / occupied Palestinian Territory	Conflict	£110,100
Asia/Middle East	Lebanon	Conflict	£75,213
Asia/Middle East	occupied Palestinian Territory	Conflict	£50,000
Asia/Middle East	Syria	Conflict	£146,300
Asia/Middle East	Syria/Lebanon	Flood response	£6,000
Europe	Ukraine	Emergency preparedness	£25,000
Global	Global (Capacity strengthening work)	Emergency preparedness	£266,111
Latin America and Caribbean	Central America	Emergency preparedness	£31,496
Latin America and Caribbean	Colombia	Flood response	£40,000
Latin America and Caribbean	Guatemala	Emergency preparedness	£19,841
			£1,624,312

NB Due to confidentiality some countries are not disclosed

86 per cent of ESC Funding will be used directly on providing grants to partners. The remaining funding is used to enable our partners to prepare for crises or scale up their response in the following ways.

Grants to partners	Funding allocated to projects throughout the year where the need is greatest	£1,392,222
Humanitarian funding	Helping partners access more funding	£46,428
Surge capacity	Deploying professionals and filling gaps until our partners can step in	£92,806
Security capacity	Ensuring that our staff and partners are safe and that they are equipped to keep others safe	£46,428
Strengthening humanitarian alliances	Influencing the humanitarian sector and bringing partners' experience to the forefront of these discussions	£46,428



When disasters hit, lives are destroyed.

Survivors lose homes, they lose land, they lose loved ones.
They lose their sense of belonging.

Your support has enabled people in crisis situations to be able to act fast, access emergency assistance, and rebuild their lives in a dignified way. Our local partners remain in these areas long after an emergency has passed, working with communities as they rebuild their lives and ensure that they are better prepared if an emergency strikes again.

CAFOD's international programme team and local partners would be very happy to talk with you about any of the issues mentioned in this report.

And for all of this, we are very grateful.

Together, we make sure that Every Second Counts.

Thank you

Above: CAFOD is helping deliver life-saving clean water and emergency toilets to refugees in a camp in Sudan, ensuring dignity and preventing disease in a time of crisis.

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