



**ESC  
INTERIM  
REPORT**

**2023**

APRIL-SEPTEMBER

# CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICT IN 2023



***The world sings of an infinite love, how can we fail to care for it?"***

**Pope Francis,  
*Laudate Deum*, #65**

Cover page: Father Vitaliy, CEO Depaul Ukraine, and his team delivering electricity generators within Ukraine.

In 2023 we have seen large scale humanitarian needs continually increasing. In the last six months alone. CAFOD has supported partners to respond to 21 crises, including earthquakes in Morocco and Afghanistan, floods in Libya and Pakistan and conflict in Yemen, South Sudan, Armenia, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. This would not be possible without your support of *Every Second Counts* and our emergency response work.

Climate emergencies are becoming more frequent and more severe around the world, causing deadly floods and people at risk of starvation. In 2023 we know that 1 in every 23 people will need emergency assistance to survive. For 2024 this is only going to increase.

On 4 October 2023, Pope Francis released his Apostolic Exhortation, *Laudate Deum*, meaning "Praise God". It calls us all to take urgent action to tackle the climate crisis. He reminds us that the climate crisis is real, cannot be denied, and is caused by human activity. We are close to breaking point, he adds, and irreversible damage has already been done. This is a present and current crisis, not a crisis of the future.

As Pope Francis emphasised in his encyclical, *Laudato Si* in 2015, "We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental" (#139).

In short, an environmental crisis is a crisis for humanity. We are all impacted, but those experiencing poverty are impacted 'first and worst.' The social and ecological crises manifesting today are not separate from each other but intertwined and we must address the interconnected "cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" that Pope Francis highlights in *Laudato Si*'.

CAFOD works alongside partners and communities who are often the most affected by the climate crisis as they face increasing numbers of climate-related disasters, yet unfairly they are the ones who have contributed the least to their cause.

## **Supporting communities whether they are in the news or not**

Some emergencies occur with little or no media attention, putting affected communities at risk. **That is where CAFOD comes in.** Our approach is grounded in working with local organisations who are part of the Church network and are present before, during and after an emergency strikes. Together with our partners, and through your support, we have been able to share hope with communities around the world. In this report, you will see a glimpse of how we have worked alongside communities and local organisations, offering support to help them build the lives they want.

## Your support makes a difference

We are grateful to all those who have contributed this year to *Every Second Counts* and shown solidarity with the communities we work alongside.

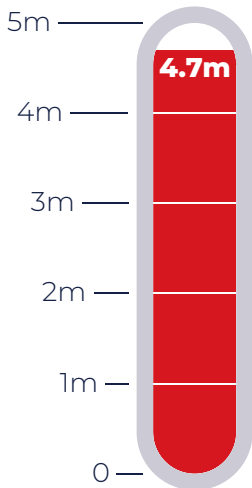
To date, CAFOD has raised £4.7 million of our £5 million *Every Second Counts* target, meaning we are £300,000 off our overall target for the four-year initiative which ends in March 2024.

Due to its success and the fact that humanitarian crises around the world continue to escalate both in scale and in frequency, CAFOD has decided to continue with a second phase of our emergency response initiative, *Every Second Counts*, for a further four years. We hope we can count on your ongoing support for years to come to enable our partners and the communities we work alongside to prepare for, survive from and rebuild after an emergency.

I am currently visiting drought-affected pastoralist communities in Marsabit, Kenya. Despite the loss of homes and livestock, these resilient individuals wanted to take a moment to share how touched they are that families thousands of miles away continue to stand in solidarity with them.

With thanks and good wishes for the New Year.

### BREAKDOWN OF AMOUNT RAISED BY ESC APPEAL SO FAR



**Rhea Tariq**  
Deputy Director of International Programmes





# DROUGHT IN THE AMAZON

## What is happening in the Amazon?

The Amazon region of Brazil is facing a historic drought, exacerbated by the current El Niño effect, climate change and deforestation. The traditional October rains are yet to arrive, and forecasts predict the dry weather continuing into 2024.

The communities living in this extremely remote part of the country are heavily reliant on the rivers for their food, trade, and access to services. However, this year they are facing record low water levels – the Rio Negro river in Manaus is at its lowest level since monitoring began in 1902. Boats can no longer cross many of the tributaries, which have dried up. This is having an impact on the availability of food and basic supplies.

Of the 62 municipalities in the Amazon region, 60 have declared a State of Emergency and the remaining two are under alert. Approximately 600,000 people (150,000 families) in the area are affected.

## What is CAFOD doing?

CAFOD is supporting our long-term partner, Caritas Brazil, providing technical support including guidance and tools to help them plan their response, as well as support on assessing needs and utilising communication channels to spread the word about the crisis. CAFOD has allocated £50,000 to provide food packages, water containers and hygiene kits to vulnerable families.

If you would like to hear more about our work in the Amazon, please do get in touch and we would be happy to arrange a meeting to discuss it further.

This page: Like many rivers in the Amazon Rainforest, the Tambopata River can be affected by seasonal variations in water levels, including droughts





**Nagorno-Karabakh**

# REFUGEE CRISIS IN ARMENIA

## What is happening in Armenia?

For many months we have been following the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, a breakaway region which falls within the internationally recognised borders of Azerbaijan, and which is inhabited by ethnic Armenians.

This area has been under dispute for decades. However, the situation has deteriorated in the last year. For almost 10 months, Azeri forces blocked the Lachin corridor, a mountain road which links Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia. The closure of this corridor severely restricts and disrupts the flow of services and key goods, including food and medicines.

These tensions erupted into violence in September 2023, displacing thousands of ethnic Armenians - 70,000 refugees fled Nagorno-Karabakh in a matter of days. As of 30 October, more than 100,000 people have arrived in Armenia. The population was already vulnerable due to the blockade depriving them of many essential needs; this will push them to the brink.

Additionally, thousands of families have been separated and there are many people, including children, missing since the start of the attacks.

## What is CAFOD doing?

The displaced people in Armenia need urgent assistance, specifically food, hygiene items, bedding, and warm clothes, emergency medical assistance, and psychosocial support. Our sister agency, Armenian Caritas, provided hot meals, shelter, bed linen and hygiene kits within days. They launched a rapid response appeal to scale up their response and reach more people.

Thanks to our ESC donors, we have sent approximately £19,000 to Caritas Armenia. This contributes to a project which plans to provide cash grants to 620 families, provide food and essential items to 438 families, and psychosocial support services for 250 people.

This page: Our partner, Caritas Armenia, distributing food and essential items to those caught up in the refugee crisis.



  
Հայկական Կարիտաս  
Armenian Caritas

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# ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CRISIS APPEAL

## What has happened?

We have all been shocked and saddened by the devastating conflict in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), including Gaza. As of December 2023, over 18,000 Palestinians have been killed – 70 per cent of them women and children – and thousands are missing, presumably under the rubble, waiting for rescue or recovery. Over 50,000 are reportedly injured. The UN reports that over 60 per cent of housing units in Gaza are destroyed or damaged.

Our partners, Sadaka Reut based in Israel and three partner agencies within Gaza, including Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Caritas Jerusalem and another we are unable to name due to security risks, are actively responding and providing urgent humanitarian aid to those in need. Families are losing their homes and loved ones; food, water and fuel are in increasingly short supply. They need urgent help.

CAFOD has worked for many years in both Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory with partners who are Christian, Jewish, Muslim and secular and we join Pope Francis' urgent call for peace and an end to the violence. CAFOD condemns the horrific killings and kidnappings led by Hamas and the scale of the Israeli government's violent retaliation, which is causing more civilian deaths and injuries.

Before the start of recent hostilities, around 500 trucks of aid a day were entering Gaza. In the first three weeks of the crisis 451 trucks were let through in total. There are 2.4 million people packed into an area the size of the Isle of Wight. Civilians are trapped with nowhere to go. There are severe shortages of food, medical supplies, fuel, and clean drinking water.

This page: The aftermath of an airstrike near the St Porphyrios Church in Gaza where Viola, a staff member of our partner, was tragically killed alongside her husband and infant daughter while sheltering there.

Tensions in the oPt and Israel have been rising throughout 2023 and the situation in Gaza was dire before this, with over 80 per cent of people reliant on humanitarian assistance for survival – a situation the UN Secretary General had described as “hell on earth” before this latest escalation.

There is simply no safe space in Gaza. The protection of innocent civilians must be the priority and should be under the laws of war.

The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem warned the events are taking us further away from achieving a lasting peace. He said: *“The operation launched from Gaza and the reaction of the Israeli Army are bringing us back to the worst periods of our recent history... [and] will create more hatred and division.”*



**May the weapons fall silent, they will never bring peace, and let the conflict not spread. Enough, enough brothers, enough!”**

**Pope Francis**

## **What is CAFOD doing?**

The situation for families in Gaza is severe. Thanks to *Every Second Counts* donations and the wider CAFOD appeal, we released £160,000 to support local trusted partners. They have already provided emergency supplies and cash assistance to some of the most vulnerable families in Gaza to buy food and essential items. This meant people were receiving support from the start of the escalation despite the limited number of aid trucks getting into Gaza.

Our partner, CRS (Catholic Relief Services) has also been preparing for winter and anticipating the need for blankets, mattresses, and kits to seal damaged homes from the elements, and providing psychosocial support to help people come to terms with what has happened.

The seven-day temporary ceasefire brought urgently needed respite to people in Gaza and enabled the release of a number of hostages. It also allowed the entry of aid trucks carrying food, medical supplies, bottled water, blankets, tents and hygiene products, as well as fuel urgently needed to power hospitals, purify water and deliver vital aid. Yet the amounts fell far short of the needs of over 2.3 million people requiring urgent help.

Since fighting resumed, Gaza has witnessed some of the most intense bombardment yet, including in the south of Gaza where hundreds of thousands had sought safety. At the same time, the firing of rockets by Palestinian armed groups into Israel has continued.

CAFOD had been continuously calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and seeks to protect civilians affected by the conflict. Please continue to keep those caught up in this crisis in your prayers.



**Most of our employees have been forced to leave their homes. Several of our employees' houses have been completely demolished. They're in shock, confused, and perplexed. They don't have electricity, and the internet is sporadic.”**

**Our partner, Caritas Jerusalem, who has approximately 100 staff in Gaza**

## **EMERGENCY APPEAL**

For more information or to make a donation, please visit [cafod.org.uk/ipc-esc](https://cafod.org.uk/ipc-esc)



Hear an update about our Israeli-Palestinian Crisis Appeal from Lizzie Funnell, CAFOD's Country Programmes Representative for the Middle East by clicking [here](#).





# UKRAINE CRISIS APPEAL

Due to the conflict in Israel and occupied Palestinian territory, the Ukraine Crisis has dropped from news headlines of late. CAFOD's partner Depaul Ukraine continues to provide essential humanitarian assistance, including food and hygiene products to vulnerable communities.

With homelessness on the rise and with winter temperatures reaching as low as  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ , Depaul Ukraine have been distributing essential items such as electricity generators, heaters, fuel, firewood, blankets, and clothing. Alongside this they are providing emergency accommodation, medical assessments, psychosocial support, and legal advice, helping families cope with what has happened to them and to find warm, safe shelter this winter.



Above: 78-year-old Anatoliy and his pet canaries.

Below: Father Vitaliy, CEO Depaul Ukraine (far right) unloading firewood with colleagues and local resident Serheii (second from right) in Ukraine.

Depaul Ukraine have been carrying out repairs to homes damaged by relentless bombings. One of the people who received this support is 78-year-old Anatoliy, a retired army colonel who lives in an apartment block in Kharkiv, with his dog and his pet canaries.

Anatoliy has been raising his canaries for 40 years and when the full-scale invasion began, he could not leave his beloved canaries behind. Soon he was the only resident left in his block, with no electricity, water or gas supply.

As temperatures dropped, he made a fire in a metal bowl to keep his apartment warm but soon everything became covered in soot, and his colourful canaries turned black.

In December 2022, the windows of Anatoliy's apartment were blown out by an explosive wave. It suddenly became unbearably cold in his apartment and he turned to Depaul Ukraine for support.

*"The house was shaking from the shelling. I looked out the window and saw a neighbouring house in flames. There was nothing to do but wait until our house catches fire." – Anatoliy*

Depaul Ukraine helped Anatoliy purchase and install a reinforced window for his apartment, and provided him with an electricity generator, blankets, pillows and an electric heater. Now, Anatoliy and his pets are warm, there is light in his apartment, and his canaries are once again yellow and orange with two newly-hatched chicks.





# RESPONDING TO PROTRACTED, LONG-TERM CRISES



## YEMEN

The ongoing conflict, floods, increasing hunger and a broken healthcare system have left ordinary people in Yemen suffering. The situation in Yemen, while often forgotten about, remains one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

The conflict began on 16 September 2015 and has resulted in a severe humanitarian and economic crisis. The UN estimates more than 21.6 million people (two-thirds of the total population) currently require humanitarian assistance. 49 per cent of health facilities are either partially functional or non-functional due to staff, fuel and power shortages, as well as lack of medicines, supplies and equipment.

Urgent action is required to save lives.

### What is CAFOD doing?

CAFOD has been supporting the emergency response efforts of our sister agency, Caritas Poland, in Yemen, since 2018, providing assistance to the most vulnerable Yemeni people.

This focuses on life-saving emergency medical interventions, essential medicine and delivering hygiene workshops to prevent the spread of disease. Most recently, CAFOD has pledged approximately £195,000 towards our partner's Emergency Appeal. This, alongside other funding, will support five health facilities to provide 45,000 people with primary health care consultations, and 1,800 women and children with midwifery consultations.

To hear more about our work in Yemen and if you would like to discuss contributing to our work, please do get in touch with us.



## AFGHANISTAN

Decades of conflict have taken a terrible toll on Afghan people, resulting in deaths, injuries and pushing families further into poverty. The UN World Food Programme (WFP) has warned over half the country's population (around 24.4 million people) needs humanitarian assistance. More than eight million people are on the verge of starvation, with a million children under the age of five at risk of dying.

With over half the population dependent on humanitarian aid to survive and as the Taliban edicts banning women attending universities and being involved in delivering aid, the suffering of Afghan people will drastically worsen as the support available for vulnerable communities is reduced.



This page: Mohammad, 22, is a farmer in Afghanistan. He was working in the fields when the earthquake struck and destroyed every home in his village.

CAFOD's local partners continue to operate despite the ever-increasing risks to their own personal safety.

Last year, on 22 June 2022, a powerful 6.1 magnitude earthquake hit the south-eastern region of Afghanistan killing at least 1,000 people, injuring more than 1,500, and destroying thousands of homes.

Sadly, this year, between October 7 and October 15, another series of earthquakes with a magnitude of 6.3 hit Herat Province in western Afghanistan, causing widespread destruction. Thousands of vulnerable populations living in underserved areas are in urgent need of humanitarian and health assistance. So far, 43,400 people across six districts have been directly affected, with almost 23 per cent of children under the age of five.

The earthquakes resulted in at least 1,482 deaths and over 2,100 injuries. Initial assessments indicate 40 health facilities have been damaged, and 3,330 homes destroyed.

The worst affected communities are in remote areas, where homes consist of mud structures, resulting in many Afghans finding themselves homeless or unable to access basic needs and rights. The recent earthquakes happened on the same weekend as the escalation in violence in Israel and the oPt, diverting media attention from the Afghan people's suffering.

## **What is CAFOD doing?**

Prior to the earthquakes our local partners were already providing food packages and cash assistance to vulnerable families across the country, and in particular some of the hardest to reach mountainous regions. We continue to support Afghans with urgent humanitarian needs whilst continuing to provide longer-term support.

*"The Afghan people cannot bear another tragedy. Millions of people in the country are already struggling to survive due to the deep economic and social crisis following the take over of power by the Taliban in August 2021, which compounded periods of drought and decades of conflict. The earthquakes that hit Afghanistan this October have left entire villages destroyed, thousands have been killed and injured and whole communities devastated. With winter rapidly approaching, the need for shelter, food and blankets is urgent."* – Janet Symes, CAFOD's Head of Asia & Middle East Region.



# EVERY **SECOND** COUNTS



Thank you for everything you have done to enable this vital work to happen. Your support continues to offer a lifeline at the most difficult moment of a family's life as well as preparing the communities we work with to be ready for whatever comes their way.

It is thanks to donations to *Every Second Counts* that we can respond to conflicts and emergencies like those shared in this report, whether they are in the news or not.

**Together, we make sure that  
EVERY SECOND COUNTS.**

**Thank you**

This page: Depaul Ukraine providing emergency assistance to communities affected by the war in Ukraine.

**If you would like to hear more about CAFOD's emergency response work please get in touch:**

**📞 Call Roisin on  
020 7095 5676**

**✉ Email [esc@cafod.org.uk](mailto:esc@cafod.org.uk)**

**🌐 Visit [cafod.org.uk/ESC](https://cafod.org.uk/ESC)**

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