



Synod on Synodality: *Being a Synodal Church in Mission*

Caritas Good Practices

INTRODUCTION

The following report shows examples of good practices being undertaken at the grassroots across the Caritas Confederation on *Being a Synodal Church in Mission*.

The Caritas Confederation was invited to reflect upon the following two questions, and to submit their responses and good practices.

1. Can your organisation share concrete examples of programmes or projects being undertaken at the grassroots which actively involve the poor not only as beneficiaries but also in the design, decision-making and implementation processes?
2. Does your organisation have examples of tools which are used which promote the "see, judge, act" methodology in a concrete and practical way at the local level?

The following responses were received from the regions of Africa (3), Asia (9), Europa (11), Latin America and the Caribbean (6) and North America (6). The Caritas Confederation looks forward to continuing its participation in the preparation of the Synod of Synodality also via the Study Groups.

SUMMARY

The responses which were received following this consultation and which are enclosed in this document, show that Caritas's synodal approach is expressed by involving the poor and other marginalised and vulnerable groups in the design and implementation of projects, programmes, advocacy and other work which aims to empower them as 'artisans of their destiny'.¹

The fundamental principle of the God-given human dignity of *every* human being is Caritas's starting point, from which Caritas organisations work to serve, involve and empower the most vulnerable in initiatives and projects which result in sustainable integral human development.

At the heart of Caritas's approach to being a synodal Church in mission is a paradigm shift away from the idea that charity is a service "to" or "for" the poor, and towards being something that is done *with* people who are the poorest in their communities, and other marginalised, vulnerable and socially isolated groups, including: women, young people, people with special educational needs and disabilities, people living with long-term illness, indigenous people, migrants, refugees, people with mental ill health, people in or released from prison, and rural communities.

¹ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 1967 https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html

There is a wide range of themes and areas of practical work which arise throughout the examples of good practices which were submitted via this consultation. Many of the good practices highlight that these issues are often interlinked and require a structured approach which takes this into account.

Some of the recurring themes include:

- Skills and training for economic empowerment, including finance management;
- Emergency Response and Humanitarian Services;
- Food Security and nutrition;
- Protection and Shelter;
- Health (e.g. HIV/AIDS).
- Agriculture;
- Education;
- Migration, human trafficking and refugees;
- Community integration;
- Interreligious dialogue;
- Climate change and integral ecology;
- Peacebuilding;
- Institutional development and capacity strengthening.

The examples in this document show that a participatory and community-driven approach to the design, decision-making processes, implementation and evaluation of projects result in increased agency and ownership at the local level, as well as enhancing local leadership. They also demonstrate the tangible results which have been achieved through this approach, and show that they have provided more effective, appropriate support, more cheaply and efficiently.

Interestingly, many of these projects pre-date the current synodal process in which the global Church is engaged, showing that being “a synodal Church in mission” is a core part of Caritas’s identity.

The See-Judge-Act methodology is used by many Caritas organisations in these good practices. Organisations have found that this methodology fosters a spirit of genuine solidarity by encouraging a culture of encounter, genuinely being with and listening to those at the local level. It is considered to be a practical approach which is aimed at identifying and effectively addressing concrete needs in a strategic and structured way.

Please note that in putting together this document, we have not changed or harmonised the language, and so different terms may be used to describe the same thing (for example: “beneficiary” and “client”). This is intended to show the diversity of the global Caritas Confederation and to ensure that we “meet people where they are” by in maintaining the identity and character of local voices.

AFRICA

1. Caritas Burundi

At the level of Caritas Burundi, good practices for a synodal Church in mission can be seen in the frequent call to work together with other Christian and non-Christian confessions. An example is the meeting with Muslims, Anglicans and World Relief in the application of the message of Laudato Si' for local initiatives to fight for the protection of the environment. Other examples include the assistance of BATWA minority groups which have been less considered in Burundian society for several years and the presence of women among the members of staff and in the governing bodies.

These are just some of the good practices that show that we are walking together in the synodal spirit through our activities to help our poorest and most vulnerable members of society.

2. Caritas Malawi: "Empowerment of women and vulnerable groups through vocational education and entrepreneurship skills in Malawi"

Our youth empowerment program focused on vocational skill building, with an emphasis on environmental preservation through the provision of alternative sources of income. Malawi is one of the most affected countries by climate-related disasters, so this project is part of the resilience-building initiatives for our communities.

Since its inception in 2016, we have successfully reached out to a total of 3454 youths with vocational skills training in Bricklaying, Carpentry and Joinery, Fabrication and Welding, Plumbing, and Electrical Installation. Since 2022, the project has also been targeting youth with special needs and so far we have reached out to 28 youths.

This year, we have expanded our efforts to include green economy trades such as solar installation and manure making. The latter aims to address soil health depletion caused by climatic shocks. We will also blend this with the humanitarian initiatives we are implementing across the nation.

3. Caritas Nigeria: Working with a synodal methodology

Caritas Nigeria exemplifies an organization actively involving the poor in the design, decision-making, and implementation processes at the grassroots level. The following thematic areas and interventions, effectively demonstrates this commitment:

- Emergency Response and Humanitarian Services (Food Security and livelihood, Cash transfers, WASH, Nutrition, Protection and Shelter).
- Health (HIV/AIDS, Malaria, TB, OVC, Maternal Health, Newborn and Child health, Nutrition).
- Agriculture & Livelihoods (Good agricultural practice and Climate-smart Agriculture, organic fertilizer and pesticides/herbicide, livelihood skill training, Savings & Internal Lending Committees (SILC), employment promotion, financial literacy).
- Anti-Human Trafficking and Irregular Migration (Protection, Shelter, GBV, Reintegration and Rehabilitation, Skills acquisition).
- Environment (Advocacy, Climate Change mitigation and adaptation, greenhouse, E-waste).

- Good Governance (Legislative advocacy, policy reforms, peace building, election monitoring, and civic engagement).
- Institutional Development & Capacity Strengthening (Training, Promoting Localization, Coordination Mechanisms, Institutional Capacity Assessments, support for Policy and Strategy development and implementation, foster innovation and learning).

Caritas Nigeria's main target beneficiaries are vulnerable communities, women, girls, boys, orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), people with disabilities (PWDs), internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, migrants, key stakeholders responsible for good governance and accountability.

From its design, decision-making, and implementation processes, Caritas Nigeria ensures that stakeholders are involved for sustainable development and empowerment of marginalised communities. These initiatives aim to address the root causes of poverty by engaging those directly affected in shaping solutions that meet their specific needs and aspirations. By including the poor in all stages of project development, from conception to evaluation, these projects ensure that interventions are relevant, effective, and sustainable. Caritas Nigeria's commitment to grassroots engagement fosters a sense of agency and dignity among the poor, empowering them to create lasting change.

Caritas Nigeria emphasizes stakeholder engagement throughout the project lifecycle, ensuring buy-in and contributions from all levels. This includes:

- Community-Driven Approach: Empowering communities to identify their needs and lead decision-making.
- Participatory Design: Working alongside the poor to design culturally appropriate solutions.
- Capacity Building: Equipping community members with the skills to sustain initiatives.
- Empowerment: Encouraging individuals and communities to advocate for themselves.

Examples of tools used are stakeholder mapping/engagements/meetings, community needs assessments, participatory workshops, focus group discussions, capacity building training.

Caritas Nigeria approach's to addressing issues of social justice and program interventions is centred around the "see, judge and act methodology". This is done through a situational analysis of the issues by engaging those affected in the communities to identify the root causes, effects and the needs of the people at the local level. For example, in Caritas Nigeria's peace building interventions, a situational analysis was conducted in the affected communities, by engaging diverse stakeholders to identify the root causes of the constant communal clashes in target communities and coming up with a program that facilitated activities that promoted religious and cultural tolerance in those communities, to promote peaceful co-existence and social cohesion in the communities. Similarly, on issues of access to justice, Caritas Nigeria collaborates with the diocesan Justice Development & Peace Commissions (JDPCs) to implement programs that educate people about their rights while also working with the Police to educate them on the appropriate ways how to handle citizens.

In addition, Caritas Nigeria's agriculture and livelihood interventions work with poor and vulnerable households to design programs that address poverty through different strategies including supporting climate-smart agricultural practices for farmers, skills acquisition and collaborating with relevant stakeholders such as the government to improve access markets and SMEs for local communities to enhance their livelihoods and help them become self-sustaining eventually.

ASIA

4. Caritas Bangladesh: CORR - The Jute Works: A Story of Hope Fulfilled

[CORR - the Jute Works](#) (CJW) is a project of Caritas Bangladesh recognised by The World Trade Organisation as a guaranteed fair-trade enterprise. CORR - the Jute Works envisions the empowerment and dignity of the disadvantaged and marginalised, especially women, people with disability and indigenous people. Its mission is to build the capacity of the marginalised and ensure them trade justice, market access and improved living standards.

The objectives of CORR - The Jute Works include:

- Artisans' (or producers') cooperatives are functional and mainstreamed in the economy;
- Artisans have access to a substantial income and contribute to cooperative growth;
- Promotion of Fair Trade;
- Expansion and growth of trade;
- Response to social development and emergencies;
- Improving the environment by planting trees and avoiding plastic bottles and bags.

CORR - the Jute Works is governed by a Board of Trustees of nine members, six of which are elected by the artisans/producers. The Board of Trustees takes all major decisions like appointment of directors, planning and approval of budget, acceptance of audit reports, approval of policies, distribution of profit, etc. In this project, the majority (six out of nine, which is 67%) of the decision makers are from the beneficiaries. Of the nine members of Board of Trustees, six are women.

Main achievements:

- 206 artisan groups with a total of 5,568 members (4963 women, 605 men)
- 268 staff (196 women, 72 men)
- 58 buyers from 18 countries
- Group Savings - BDT 9.6 million
- Self-Reliance Fund - BDT 33 million
- Producers/Artisans Security Fund - BDT 39 million
- Education and other funds - BDT 7.8 million
- Total Income (Revenue and Non-revenue) - BDT 217 million (July 2022 to June 2023)
- Export Around the World - USD 1.68 million (July 2022 - June 2023)

(Note: 1 USD = 110 BDT)

A modest project in Tejgaon, Dhaka since 1968 - the Jagarani Women's Cooperative and Training Centre - preceded CORR - the Jute Works (CJW). Begun by Sister Olivia Salazer, CSC and taken over by Sister Mary Lilian, SMRA, it was based on handicrafts of jute, adapted from sisal products which the two Sisters had studied in the Philippines. It became the training centre for the much bigger CJW.

Just when CORR (Christian Organisation for Relief and Rehabilitation, former name of Caritas Bangladesh) was concentrating on how to help war widows to survive, it received an offer from a British Company in New York City (through CARE) to help to design jute handicrafts. The company offered to send a young designer to prepare designs and train local artisans in their design and manufacture. With

the help of many people, CJW grew into an organisation with a wide variety of jute handicrafts for international sale.

Roopa Mehta, President of World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO) sent a message to CJW last year on the occasion of its Golden Jubilee celebration: "CORR - The Jute Works is one of the pioneering Fair Trade Social Enterprises, promoting and advocating the values of Fair Trade. CJW made a small beginning with a mission to offer relief and rehabilitation to women artisans in rural areas post the liberation war in 1971. Times were hard but CJW had a clear line of vision strengthened with the support of donor agencies, professionals and the community of fair-trade buyers to provide sustainable livelihoods and financial security to a growing number of rural women artisans while enabling and empowering them."

CJW has been a self-reliant organisation for over a decade. It has an education fund to support the children of the artisans and a welfare fund for emergency support to any artisans in need. Financial support is also provided for tree planting, education and for relationship support.

CJW has received the highest recognition – the Gold Medal from the Presidents of Bangladesh – a number of times for its transformative work and its relentless pursuit of social justice and fair economic practices.

5. Caritas Hong Kong: Jockey Club Healthy Neighbourhood Kitchen Project

In Hong Kong, there are approximately 110,000 subdivided flats / subdivided units (flats that are divided into two or more separate units to house more people). These cramped living spaces are often rented by singles or couples, but they also house single parents with children and even three-generation households. The severe housing shortage in Hong Kong has driven people to occupy these tiny units.

The Jockey Club Healthy Neighbourhood Kitchen Project aims to create an expanded living space for families living in subdivided units, where everyone can cook, eat, and exercise together. By providing a hygienic and comfortable shared space for cooking and dining, as well as a living room for socializing and stress relief, the project aims to build healthier lifestyles and enhance overall well-being for residents. Through this initiative, residents can connect with community resources, engage with family members and neighbours, and empower themselves to manage their health more effectively.

We conducted focus groups and engaged our service users in the co-designing of the hub alongside our team prior to renovation. The team integrated ideas from the service users and communicated them to the designers to ensure that the hub's facilities and design meet the needs of our service users. For instance, service users expressed the importance of having the living room located next to the staff office, with a see-through glass window from the office to the kitchen. This way, parents and staff can keep an eye on the children playing in the living room while the parents prepare meals in the kitchen.

Our team adopted a bottom-up approach to design a social contracting process in collaboration with our service users. This approach involves making operational decisions for the hub together. For example, we organized a meeting with regular users of the community kitchen to discuss and agree upon the elements of the social contract. Once everyone agrees, we document these agreements to ensure that all kitchen users abide by the social contract.

To ensure that our health program is effective for our service users, we co-designed certain elements with them, enhancing their motivation to lead healthier lifestyles. For instance, we encouraged service users with prediabetes to replace bread with eggs and bananas for breakfast, offering a healthier alternative at the same cost.

Applying the "see, judge, act" methodology at the local level to help families living in sub-divided flats involves a practical approach aimed at effectively addressing their needs:

See: Start by closely observing and understanding the specific challenges and circumstances faced by families living in sub-divided flats within the local community. This can be achieved through assessments, engaging in dialogue, and gathering relevant data to gain comprehensive insights. The team often conducts home visits and engages in door-to-door interactions to observe and connect with these families.

Judge: Analyse the collected information, assessing the root causes of poverty and identifying the underlying factors that contribute to their ongoing struggles. This evaluation should take into account social, economic, and systemic aspects that impact the lives of these families. For example, over 60% of our service users indicate they are experiencing varying degrees of pain, it is important to organize pain management group sessions to address their specific needs.

Act: Based on the understanding gained from the previous steps, take decisive action to implement tangible solutions that address the identified issues. This may involve collaborating with local organizations, governments, and communities to develop and execute targeted initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty and improving the well-being of these disadvantaged individuals. For instance, we collaborate with various community partners, such as NGOs, local stores in the market, and universities, to build a robust resource safety net for our service users.

6. Caritas India: Haat Bazar: Increasing Local Food Availability

It is a troublesome weekly routine for villagers in North and Central India to travel long distances to markets to purchase household supplies including food materials. For most villagers, market is a synonym of money drain because of the expenditure that they must incur on travel and purchases.

"We have to invest an entire day whenever we go to market. Some of us have to sacrifice daily wage labor and travel to Mathura to buy vegetables", narrated Mr. Lakhansingh, a member of the Kisan club of Rampur village.

Caritas India is implementing the Saksham program in Rampur village of Mathura district in Uttar Pradesh to strengthen the rural livelihoods of small and marginal farmers. One of the considerations of Saksham is to help communities establish haat bazaars (weekly markets) under community initiative and leadership to help them reduce dependency on the exploitative market.

Saksham team raised a Kisan club (farmers' club) in which several rounds of discussions were held on the possibility of starting a local market as the village was 18 kilometres away from the market in Mathura which was the closest. "During Kisan club meetings, the members discussed the possibility of starting a local market since the village had enough population to sustain a weekly market. The idea

initially was not accepted as viable but detailed discussions helped us find a practical solution,” elaborated Mr. Kaluram a leader of the local Kisan club.

“The Kisan club members decided to take the demand to start the haat bazaar (Local Market) plan to our Pradhan (village headman) for his consideration and approval,” Mr. Lakhan Singh a member of the Kisan club narrated how the movement for starting the local market took off.

“Community had brought to me the proposal to start a haat Bazaar in the village bounds. Since I was aware of the poor connectivity of the village to the nearest market, I assured them that we will find a way to start the local market”, Mr. Bhagwan Singh, the headman of Rampur.

Encouraged by the positive response from the village headman, the Kisan club members convened a community meeting to discuss operational matters like place, time, and dates of the weekly market. “During the community meeting that the Pradhan had convened, we had discussed how a local market will help us increase income by selling our produce locally and how we can reduce our expense on travel to a remote market. We found it as a win-win proposal for the consumer and the seller”, described Ms. Hukuma, a member of the local SHG which had joined hands with the farmer club to start the haat bazaar.

“We decided in the general meeting that we would hold the haat bazaar every Saturday on the sides of the road that passes through the village from 3 pm onwards”, said Mr. Bhagwan Singh, the Pradhan. In the meeting, it was unanimously decided to constitute a management committee to supervise the market and to address the complaints of buyers and sellers. Subsequently, a five-member team, headed by the Pradhan himself, was constituted to oversee the preparations and management of the haat bazaar. The management committee later sent vehicles with loudspeakers to adjacent villages to announce the commencement of the haat bazaar on 22 July 2022.

7. Caritas India: How Pathordohora students grow their mid-day meal from school nutrition garden

The government of India started the “mid-day meal” (MDM) programme to combat classroom hunger and to motivate underprivileged kids to attend school and pay attention in class. Though MDM provides basic nutritious food to the children, sometimes it falls insufficient for the tribal children whose food and nutritional requirements are a little different.

The ‘School Nutrition Garden’ concept was proposed by the farmer’s group of the U3 programme to fulfil the additional nutritional requirement of the children and improve the quality and quantity of MDM services. The suggestion was welcomed in the meeting organized by the U3 programme which fosters and strengthens people’s institutions for the empowerment of communities for the sustained process.

The farmer group headed by Raban Nayek, Haren Bhakta and Tara Bhakta discussed the proposal of setting up a nutrition garden in the school premises with the Headmaster of Pathordohara Primary School. In the school, a nutrition garden was developed by the farmers in 2 khatas of land which is now managed by the school children. The nutrition garden is full of different types of vegetables which are grown without the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Students are happy as they monitor the nutrition garden and collect the required vegetables for cooking every day.

Caritas India and Seva Kendra Calcutta team supported the effort in capacity building of the group in managing the garden. School teachers, volunteers and students wholeheartedly engaged in the upkeep of their dream garden flourishing with vegetables like cauliflower, snake beans, radish, carrot, spinach, tomato and cabbage.

Similar nutrition gardens are springing up across the nearby areas with the support of farmer's groups to add value and quality to MDM in schools. The actions promoted by the U3 programme have empowered the community to take collective action to resolve their issue.

Latika Murmu loves to have green vegetables served with the Mid-Day Meal (MDM). She says now our plates have safe-to-eat food. Many students like Latika are now getting nutritious food in their Mid-Day Meals.

The students of Pathordohora school in West Bengal grow and consume vegetables from their school nutrition garden. Pathordohora village in the Jhargram district of West Bengal has made this exceptional change which makes them distinct from others.



8. Caritas India: Redefining Empowerment for the Hearing Impaired

In the heart of Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara district, the silent struggles of Ms. Haseena (name changed), born with a hearing impairment, echo the broader challenges faced by individuals with hearing loss. However, amidst societal barriers and limited opportunities, Caritas India's Community-Based Rehabilitation (CI CBR) program emerges as a source of unwavering support, empowering Ms. Haseena not just to overcome communication hurdles but to lead a life of dignity and self-reliance.

Hearing impairment, though often silent, brings forth a myriad of challenges. Beyond the obvious communication barriers, it stunts language development and casts a shadow of social isolation. Ms. Haseena's journey highlights the deeper impact, with academic setbacks, limited job prospects, and the looming specter of mental health issues. Despite her determined spirit, societal roadblocks truncated her educational journey at the 5th standard, underscoring the pressing need for comprehensive support for individuals facing hearing loss.

In 2015, CI CBR became a pivotal force in Ms. Haseena's life, identifying her with a 70% hearing loss. This marked the commencement of a transformative journey, where CI CBR's holistic approach went beyond the conventional understanding of support. The team facilitated her disability documentation,

ensuring a monthly pension that not only provided financial assistance but also symbolized a lifeline of support. Ms. Haseena found a community within the local Self-Help Group (SHG) for persons with disabilities, with CI CBR acting as a bridge over communication barriers, creating an environment of understanding and inclusion.

Acknowledging the significance of her residual hearing, CI CBR took a step further, arranging for a hearing aid from ALIMCO. This seemingly simple gesture held profound implications, not only improving Ms. Haseena's ability to communicate but also empowering her to actively participate in discussions. The significance of this shift cannot be overstated, as CI CBR's role moved beyond providing aid to fostering an environment where Ms. Haseena could truly engage and contribute.

Supported by CI CBR, Ms. Haseena assumed the role of Secretary in the Village-SHG (V-SHG) and became an integral part of the Block Level Organisation of Persons with Disabilities (BOPD) Governing Body in 2018. The transformation from a passive observer to an active participant epitomizes the impact of tailored support and the ethos of CI CBR in empowering individuals facing hearing impairment.

CI CBR's commitment to holistic empowerment is exemplified in its support for Ms. Haseena's pursuit of education beyond traditional academic realms. In a remarkable turn of events, CI CBR facilitated her enrolment in a beautician course and tailoring training. These endeavours, often overlooked in the conventional discourse on disabilities, proved to be essential building blocks in Ms. Haseena's journey to self-reliance.

Armed with newfound skills, Ms. Haseena not only established her own tailoring unit but also initiated a home-based beauty parlour. Recognized as a Mehndi artist in her village, her dedication and multi-tasking efforts resulted in a steady income for her and her family. This not only serves as a testament to Ms. Haseena's resilience but also underscores the transformative impact that targeted support can have in fostering economic independence and self-esteem.

Ms. Haseena's journey culminated in well-deserved recognition. In 2019, as part of the Women's Day celebrations, she received the Divyang Pratibha Award, a testament to her efforts, perseverance, and contribution to the development of persons with disabilities in the Pandhurna block of Chhindwara. Beyond local recognition, she was acknowledged as an achiever and contributor to the social cause by the Collective Action for Basic Rights Foundation, felicitated on Women's Day in 2021. These accolades not only shine a light on Ms. Haseena's individual achievements but also underscore the broader impact CI CBR can have on transforming lives and fostering inclusive communities.

While Ms. Haseena's story stands as a testament to the impact of CI CBR on an individual level, the program's reach extends far beyond. Catering to 6182 individuals with total hearing loss, 3676 with partial hearing loss, and 2026 facing speech and hearing difficulties, CI CBR recognizes and addresses the diverse needs of individuals with hearing and speech impairments. By acknowledging these categories in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, CI CBR plays a crucial role in ensuring social security and upholding the dignity of those facing silent struggles.

In the symphony of empowerment, CI CBR's role becomes not just a support system but a catalyst for transformative change, illuminating paths toward a more inclusive and dignified society. Through individual stories like Ms. Haseena's, CI CBR demonstrates that, with targeted support and

understanding, individuals facing hearing impairment can not only overcome challenges but also become contributors to their communities, dispelling societal misconceptions and fostering an environment of true inclusion and acceptance.



9. Caritas India: This election, Children are geared up with their Charter of demand

In the bustling communities of Darjeeling Constituency, something remarkable is unfolding as the Lok Sabha elections loom on the horizon. It's not the usual political fervour that's catching attention, but the voices of children echoing through the streets, demanding change and seeking for their due entitlements under the Surokhit Shaishav program.

The Surokhit Shaishav program in West Bengal is working towards effective child protection systems and promoting children's right to education, inclusive development, and social participation. The program is nurturing a generation of leaders who are not just the beneficiaries of change but the drivers of it. It's about creating a world where every child is safe, supported, and free to dream.

Led by dedicated Child Protection Workers (CPWs) Ujjwal and Tites, children's clubs and youth clubs in project areas have united to craft a powerful document: The Charter of Demands by Children. This charter isn't just a list of requests; it's a testament to the collective aspirations of young minds striving for a better future.

At Anugyalaya, a children's manifesto drafting program ignited the spark among members of Alphonso Children's Club. Guided by volunteer Nirmala Chhetri and CPW Ujjwal, these young changemakers embarked on a journey to shape their vision for a more inclusive society.

In Lower Fagu and Sukhia areas, the spirit of civic engagement soared as children delved into the intricacies of governance and legislation. Through group discussions and basic orientations led by CPWs, they gained insights into the workings of the parliamentary system and the power of advocacy.

The core demands articulated by these young advocates reflect their fundamental rights and aspirations. From access to quality education and nutritious food to basic amenities like clean water, sanitation facilities, and streetlights, their vision encompasses the essentials for a dignified childhood.

But their demands extend beyond infrastructure; they seek spaces for recreation and play, recognizing the importance of holistic development for every child. Their call for children's parks and gardens underscores the need for safe environments where creativity can flourish, and friendships can bloom.

As the election season unfolds, these young campaigners are gearing up to make their voices heard. With Lok Sabha candidates set to visit their communities for political campaigns, the children, alongside staff and volunteers, are poised to present their charter of demands.

Their message is clear: children are not passive recipients of policies; they are active participants in shaping the future of their nation. Through the Charter of Demands by Children, they are asserting their rights, amplifying their voices, and demanding a seat at the decision-making table.

In the halls of power, amidst the clamor of political discourse, let us not forget the voices that matter most—the voices of our children, calling for a future where every dream is within reach, and every child is cherished and protected.



10. Caritas India: Asset Based Community Development – A Paradigm Shift

"Previously, we used to ask people what they are bringing in for the community," says Sanicharwa Munda, an active member of Musungu village in Angara block, said, "but now we have begun contemplating how we may build upon our own current resources."

Musungu in Ranchi's Angara block is one of the 165 tribal dominant villages chosen to participate in the Gram Nirman initiative. The village has three surrounding hamlets, but the residents' socio-economic situation is still poor, and people are fighting to meet their basic needs.

People in Musungu village have participated in Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) exercises along with the Caritas India team since the new phase of Gram Nirman began in the village in July 2021. The visioning exercise included participants of all ages, including males, females, adolescent girls,

youth, children, the elderly, migrants, widows and widowers, and orphans. The exercise's focus was on "what they already have as a resource in their village" and "how they could expand on that."

The whole exercise created a sense of ownership among the community. The ABCD tool provided an opportunity for the village communities to think and contribute to the development of their own village. They have mapped and streamlined several assets including natural assets, human assets, forest-based assets, physical assets, etc. The community has got a different perspective to look upon their existing resources, for some of them, it was an eye-opener. Based on the existing resources community itself has made the plan to strengthen and sustain the existing resources.

Following a thorough facilitation process by the Caritas India team, the community took the first step in strengthening their existing resources on March 7th, 2022, by completely refurbishing existing ponds (100 feet * 70 feet in size) with the community contributions. Under the able leadership of PRI members and ward members, villagers of Musungu has formed multiple teams including women and people living with disabilities with very clear roles, responsibilities, and deadlines. It was a strict guideline for everyone to abide by the set norms and in case of any failure, there was a provision of nominal monetary penalty by the Gram Sabha.

This collective initiative has generated several additional collective efforts in the village, as the community recognizes the value of its existing assets and how to grow and sustain them. Women SHG members discovered *Mahua* (*Madhuca longifolia* (Koenig)) as a natural resource and began collective purchase and aggregation of it. This has allowed them to go one step up the value chain, as they are no longer just collectors, but also actors in the value chain with bargaining power due to economies of scale. Women have also begun to prepare Mahua laddoo (sweet) as an elementary level of value addition at the village level, earning money for their families.

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is a community-led data collection and planning tool that enables the community to map and then envision their own village development using existing resources. The new phase of Gram Nirman has been implemented in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and urban slums of East Delhi consisting of 4 clusters covering 165 villages and 18 urban slums from July 2021 onwards.

"This is just the beginning," said Neelam Munda, Musungu village female ward member, "we are now planning to create bamboo-based elevated platforms for our goats, which will keep them clean and healthy."

11. Caritas Church of Sacred Heart Kampar (Member of Caritas Malaysia): Medical Mission for Migrant Communities

Caritas Church of Sacred Heart Kampar and Caritas Cathedral of the Holy Spirit are two of the parish based Caritas under Caritas Diocese of Penang, a member of Caritas Malaysia.

In response to the pressing needs of the migrant and undocumented communities in the area, Caritas Church of Sacred Heart Kampar initiated a Medical Mission aimed at providing essential healthcare assistance. The aim of this Medical Mission is to respond to the needs of migrant communities and therefore empowering them, exemplifying the church's commitment to social justice and service to the marginalized.

The See-Judge-Act method was used as a guide for decision making to begin the Medical Mission.

STEP 1: See – Knowing the needs and the community

With approximately 1000 migrant parishioners, primarily Indonesian with some Bangladeshi and Nepali individuals, documentation emerged as a prominent issue. Many migrants are lacking healthcare and medical aid due to their lack of legal documentation which deters them from seeking medical assistance. The well-being of mothers and children facing various health challenges was also a significant concern. In many cases, they are not eligible for public health services due to their immigration status as they risk deportation, and therefore leaving them without access to essential healthcare. Discrimination and stigma also deter them from seeking for help for the fear of being treated unfairly or condemnation due to their status.

Acknowledging these challenges by the migrant communities, the parish Caritas with the parish priest identified communities that needed healthcare services and initiated efforts to address the needs of migrant communities.

STEP 2: Judge – Dignity, option for the poor, and solidarity

The situation of migrants in Kampar, viewed through the lens of Scripture and the teaching of the Catholic Church highlights some important principles. Moved by these, the Medical Mission strove to be inclusive and to provide healthcare services without discrimination or prejudice.

The Church's preferential option for the poor and vulnerable compels the parish Caritas in Kampar to support and to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable as they seek to build better lives for themselves and their families.

At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. This entails advocating for the rights of migrants in Kampar, ensuring they have access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. The efforts also foster understanding and harmony among diverse communities, promoting integration and mutual respect among migrants and local residents.

STEP 3: Act – Coordination and collaboration

The collaboration and coordination efforts undertaken by Caritas representatives from the Church of Sacred Heart, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, the parish priest, Caritas Diocese of Penang, neighboring parishes, Tzu Chi Charity Foundation and the embassy demonstrate a proactive approach to addressing the healthcare needs and legal challenges faced by migrant communities in Kampar. By pooling resources, expertise, and networks, they are able to maximize their impact and effectiveness in serving the marginalized.

With this Medical Mission, it created an awareness to the parishioners to care for the migrant community with the assistance and support, including access to healthcare, social services as well as addressing their spiritual and emotional needs. It is also a channel to create a more inclusive and compassionate society where migrants are welcomed in the parish and promoting integration with the local Catholic community emphasizing their commitment to serving those in need and working towards social justice and empowerment.

12. Caritas Myanmar / KMSS: Community-led approach to building shelter units

KMSS-MKN completed 45 shelter units with kitchens at Hka Shi Camp, 80 single shelter units at Ja Yang Camp and 57 at Hpung Lum Yang Camp. In addition, 100 units of shelter renovation has been completed on 60 units in Je Yang Camp and 40 units in Hpun Lum Yang Camp. Shelter construction activity was undertaken by applying and practicing community-led approaches aiming to empower the strength of community and enhance the resilience capacity. There have been wonderful changes and feedback from beneficiaries and host community.

Households, management committees and communities are very satisfied the new shelter provided by KMSS-MKN. After receiving the new shelter, people feel safe, privacy and secure, especially women, children and disabled people. It is also very comfortable and safe for adult girls, as the shelter makes it easy to go out to the latrine and bathing area.

EUROPA

13. Caritas Europa Regional Secretariat

Caritas Europa Grassroots Participation Handbook: In Chapters 2.1 and 2.2 of the Caritas Europa Grassroots Participation Handbook demonstrate good practices of community building and social outreach in the region. https://www.caritas.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/grassroots_participation_handbook_FINAL_singles-edited-190322_web.pdf

The Caritas Europa Grassroots Participation Roadmap is helpful to explain the process for the approach to inclusion, synodality and "the Caritas way of working": www.grassroots.caritas.eu

Mapping: With 49 members in 46 countries, Caritas Europa has an extensive network. Our members have hundreds of projects running at any given time, so it is important to know who is doing what and where. Mapping is the collection, compilation and organisation of this information, which is then made available to our members via the Caritas Internationalis Mapping tool. Mapping also gathers all the institutional information of Caritas members around the world into one place.

<https://www.caritas.eu/empowering-caritas/mapping/>

14. CAFOD: – AME Regional Agroecology Exchange Programme

Partners in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Lebanon have expertise or interest in agroecological practices, with a focus on food sovereignty approaches and the leadership of small-scale producers, particularly women. This project is fostering a culture of encounter through cross-regional learning between agroecological practitioners and farmers bringing them together for the first time, enabling evolution of practices and appropriate technologies, and strengthening the evidence base for farmers and policy influence. The primary focus has been the practice of agroecological techniques such as organic compost production, organic vegetable production and pest management drawing together expertise from across the region, with research to capture and quantify positive impacts for small scale farmers and the environment.

The partner exchange has been done in different phases. Initially partner staff directly involved in promoting agroecological techniques came together in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to learn together and then phase II included a similar approach with farmers. Each organisation sent representatives, and three farmers came to the sessions. This is very important shift for the project as learning and sharing are going beyond partners to actual farmers who can be inspired by work happening in other countries. We are still in implementation phase and capturing outcomes from this process.

15. CAFOD: Protecting young women in mining areas in DRC

With our partner, the Olame Centre, we have been implementing a 3-year project aimed at protecting women in mining areas in DRC. Women participated from the start of the process by designing the intervention, which was complemented by a participatory needs assessment. The methodologies that have been put in place enable Olame Centre to capture real time information from project participants to make adjustments to the project, this includes a feedback and complaint mechanism which is regularly reviewed, and actions are taken in response to what participants are sharing. For example, at the start of the process girls indicated that parents, in particular mothers, were not very involved, hence

they suggested to engage more with their parents in this process and to have activities that are targeted to their mothers, so that they can leave the mining industry. Other ideas that came in the design were the payment of school fees and materials, to support their enrolment into schools and motivate them to not go back into mining. The project is still being implemented and by the end we will conduct a participatory evaluation of this project.

16. The Ministry of Catholics for AIDS Prevention and Support (CAPS) (Member of Caritas Social Action Network – CSAN, England and Wales): Positive Faith – Peer Support for People Living with HIV (PLWH)

CAPS aims to be a voice in the church for people living with HIV & a Catholic voice in the HIV sector. Through our *Positive Faith* Ministry, we prioritise the pastoral support of PLWH. Our 5 peer support communities meet regularly in London, Manchester and Cambridge. Retreat weekends each year allow our members to strengthen these networks of mutual support, friendship and fellowship. We have a membership of approx. 500 PLWH across the UK with 200 PLWH attending a peer support group event each year. (The peer support ministry first began as *Positive Catholics* but was renamed *Positive Faith* to clarify our welcome and inclusion of Christians from other denominations).

CAPS is a small volunteer led charity and can be described (in current voluntary sector terminology) as a 'By-and-for' organisation. We have always adhered to the principle of the 'meaningful involvement of people with HIV or AIDS' (MIPA) established by the World Health Organisation at the Paris AIDS Summit in 1994. Consistently since 2009 a majority of our Trustees are PLWH.

CAPS invests the majority of our time, energy and resources in PLWH. Any service we provide, whether through the *Positive Faith* ministry or CAPS' training or educational activities is decided upon, designed and delivered in collaboration with our members PLWH.

This investment in PLWH is a choice rooted in our Catholic principles of the preferential option for the poor, solidarity and subsidiarity. Of our present Trustees Board 70% are people diagnosed with HIV; 70% are Black African or Black British; 30% White European or British. 70% heterosexual and 30% gay people. Just over half the Board are Catholic with all but one belonging to other Christian traditions. A majority are immigrants who have previously been granted refugee status in the UK. Several of the current Board members are awaiting decisions in their immigration cases. CAPS Board reflects, is representative of and run 'By-and-for' the communities we exist to serve.

The first Positive Faith peer support group meeting was held in central London in 2004 in direct response to the needs expressed by Christian PLWH for pastoral support and spiritual guidance from the Church.

Each peer support group meeting is facilitated by one of the members. Other roles such as preparing the room, shopping for food or cooking and serving are undertaken by the members.

Our peer support ministry meetings are structured around three core activities:

Prayer - First, we come together as sisters and brothers and acknowledge that where one or two are gathered in His name, Christ is present. We pray with each other and for all PLWH throughout the world. Time spent in shared prayer is essential. In some groups we 'pray the Word' using Lectio-Divina

and some groups will sing hymns together. Prayers of intercession will be offered before the period of shared prayer concludes in the words our Saviour gave us.

Sharing & Listening - Second, we spend time listening to one another, without interruption or comment. Each person is invited to speak about whatever they wish to. It may be a worry that they have about any aspect of their life or relationships or a joyful experience. It may be recounting how they spoke with a family member about their health for the first time or a parent wondering whether the time is right to explain to their child that s/he was born with HIV. Sharing may include experiences of falling in love or feeling heart-broken, a personal experience related to faith or spirituality or a medical issue.

In a community of support and the company of friends a person is able to share some part of themselves without fear of feeling misunderstood or judged. We make space for the Holy Spirit to move amongst us and the invitation of our Lord is embodied:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matt. 11: 28-30.

Discussion is avoided and advice never given unless specifically requested by the person sharing. The members agree to listen without judgment to the best of their ability and each person is reminded that what they have to share may be just the precious words that another member of the group needs to hear. This vulnerable sharing is always a gift for others and listening is the first act of loving service.

Breaking bread together - The final hour is spent sharing a meal together prepared by the members and continuing with conversation informally.

We agree not to repeat what is shared without the explicit permission of the individual concerned. Our confidentiality agreement provides a degree of safety that may allow someone to find the courage to share often painful experiences.

We emphasise an ethic of friendship and the role that each person has in providing a welcome for the other. This means we accept each person as they are. Welcome begins when a person feels seen, heard, accepted and understood, just as they are, in that present moment.

"If it wasn't for my encounter with other HIV positive Catholics, I think it would have been a very lonely journey, and I don't know what the outcome would look like...My spiritual nurturing from other people has been from my peers, from fellow Catholics living with HIV."

Our approach relies upon Christian PLWH, who have been supported through the crisis of diagnosis, and in turn support others. Our method is simple and yet we bear witness to the ways in which the Holy Spirit uses these occasions to heal and strengthen our members.

This aspect of peer support is especially empowering for any Christian living with HIV who may once have felt crushed under the stigma of the cross of HIV but comes to realise that they have a valued role in Christian ministry for others. This can also be understood as sign of a maturing in faith and the more deliberate exercise of adult discipleship after the manner of our teacher and brother Jesus. A certain strength is to be found within a fellowship of the weak bound together in faith.

CAPS is a ministry led by lay people, the majority of whom are Christians living with HIV, which signifies inclusion, welcome and making the resources of our faith relevant and meaningful for people living with HIV who are more usually unseen and unheard in our Church.

17. Catholic Care (Member of Caritas Social Action Network – CSAN, England and Wales)

Catholic Care supports a Community Market, a grassroots project at a parish in Bradford. The Community Market is run with parish volunteers, SVP volunteers and Catholic Care volunteers.

The Market has developed from just selling basic items, to selling fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, tinned and dried food, toiletries, including feminine hygiene products, and cleaning products.

People who originally came as beneficiaries have now become volunteers themselves.

Last year the volunteers decided to also run a “pre-loved” stall of second hand clothes and at Christmas they had a toy stall.

Catholic Care also supports a luncheon club for older people run by volunteers in a parish in Huddersfield. The volunteers here are involved in assigning responsibilities, such as who collects the money, and they meet on a regular basis to discuss and agree what is good for the group going forward.

18. Pact (Member of Caritas Social Action Network – CSAN, England and Wales)

Pact is a pioneering charity that supports prisoners, people with convictions, and their children and families. Pact works to the principle of subsidiarity, extending it through our management and staffing, to the people we serve. We serve people with lived experience - or rather ‘expertise’ - of the criminal justice system - women, men and young people, and their children and families. As a group, these people are often marginalised and on the peripheries of Society. Nevertheless, Pact seeks to be true to its Catholic values, and so we first of all ‘Listen’ to the people we serve.

Lived Expertise at Governance Level

As a registered charity, Pact is governed by a Board of Trustees. Two of our trustee places are designated for people with lived expertise. One is currently held by a former prisoner, who has turned her life around, and now works to reform the justice system. The other by the daughter of a man who was held in prison due to offences he committed as a consequence of psychiatric illness. Both trustees bring invaluable insights and play a full role in the strategic governance of the charity.

Lived Expertise of Prison Healthcare (prisoners’ families)

Many people in prison suffer mental ill health, and the physical and mental health of prisoners is significantly worse than the general population. We also experience high levels of self-harm and suicide in prisons in England and Wales. We have no health advocates in the British prison system. We realised many years ago that there is a potential army of people who could advocate for better healthcare for prisoners - with the right kind of support - namely, their families and carers. Pact is now running three ‘Listen to Families’ projects - led by family members of prisoners - and supported by the NHS. We

facilitate for family members to speak truth to power - the power being the NHS, the Prison Service, and the range of prison healthcare providers. This is proving highly impactful. The NHS in London and three of the major providers of prison healthcare have agreed to sign up to a new Charter for Carers, which will oblige them to take phone calls from worried family members, record any key information shared by family members concerning medical or health conditions, and generally, to involve family members in their loved ones' healthcare.

Shadow Advisory Board (men in prison)

Our 'Shadow Advisory Board' for the Porticus-funded 'Routes2Change' programme at two London prisons, consists of a group of serving prisoners at each establishment. These men are supported to attend meetings and provide ideas, suggestions, and submit questions, directly to the Governors of the prisons, the CEO of Pact, and other senior leaders. Their insights, experience and understanding ensure our work remains focused and relevant. They help us ensure our language is appropriate, and that our models of service are designed and built with real understanding of the perceptions and experiences of people in prison. They form a key function in helping us to understand and see the needs, judge the most effective solutions, test them, and observe the results (See-Judge-Act).

Hear Our Voices (Prisoners' Children)

We ran a five-year programme of listening to children and young people. On the basis of what they told us, we created a national Children and Young People's Service Development Manager. Among other things, her work has enabled us to create and distribute free guidance to over 300 schools on how schools can best support children who have a parent in prisons.

Service User Involvement Toolkit & Specialist

We have employed a member of staff who is a former prisoner, who with support, has developed a guide for all of our staff in how to engage, listens and use lived expertise to design, develop or review services.

Peer Support Toolkit & Specialist

We have also employed a second member of staff, in a similar role, also an ex-prisoner, to develop our guidance and know how in how to enable prisoners to give something back, and to feel a sense of dignity and worth, through becoming a Pact Peer worker in a prison.

For more information about Pact please see: <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/>

19. Caritas Shrewsbury (Diocesan Caritas, Member of Caritas Social Action Network – CSAN, England and Wales): SEND Together Group

The SEND Together group is based at St Aidan's Centre in Wythenshawe, Manchester. (*N.B. SEND stands for special educational needs and disabilities.*) This peer support work is centred on actively involving people in the community (which faces multiple disadvantages) in the design, decision-making and implementation of the group's work, which includes a weekly support group, monthly SEN Den and regular peer support. More broadly, we see community organising as a key practical way to promote the "see, judge, act" methodology at the local level.

Main achievements:

- 43 families supported;
- 34 different parents or carers accessed the weekly support group (8 per week on average);
- 44 children with additional needs took part in at least one family activity the group organises during the year, with over 50% attending an event at least every 2 months. Siblings are also welcome to attend events;
- 7 parents/carers helped filling in forms (Education & Health Care Plans or PIP);
- 12 mothers and 1 carer from the group have been engaged in campaigning on SEND issues as part of the Women of Wythenshawe project and with Greater Manchester Citizens.

The new monthly SEN Den has been hugely popular. Numbers have had to be limited since a peak of 23 parents/carers and 31 children last October. 41 families accessed the SEN Den at least once during year. The group has worked hard to create a sensory room which has helped provide a quiet space for children and is a much needed and welcome addition to the support on offer. During the school holidays the group also organise family events or trips - last summer 25 children enjoyed visiting Knowsley Safari Park.

"I love going to the SEN Den. There are others just like me. I can just be myself." – 8-year-old girl with additional needs

Winter is a particularly challenging time for SEND families with the challenge of keeping homes warm and the reduced opportunities to play outside. Funding via the Woman of Wythenshawe project supplied 30 Winter Warmer Packs to families including a teddy which could be warmed, a blanket, gloves, socks, earmuffs, and fidget toys for children. The packs were really well received as these quotes from mums show:

- "My daughter was absolutely ecstatic when she opened the bag and couldn't wait to show me – once she had put on the earmuffs, gloves and wrapped herself in the blanket."
- "I cried just watching him open the bag!!"
- "My son just couldn't put the teddy down! He loves the warmth from it."
- "My girl never wears socks, but she won't take these off! Even when she goes to bed! She absolutely loves the pack!"

20. Caritas Westminster (Diocesan Caritas, Member of Caritas Social Action Network – CSAN, England and Wales): Seeds Hub

Seeds Hub is dedicated to supporting communities that face social and economic inequalities. We do this by assisting community members in starting businesses that make a positive impact. We run start-up and accelerator programmes for people who are on low incomes, unemployed or are underrepresented in the start-up community space. Programmes consist of workshops, one-to-one mentoring, access to a desk in our newly renovated space near Wembley Stadium and peer-to-peer support sessions.

We are now on our 8th start-up program cohort. We have spent considerable time refining and improving our offer in line with feedback from participants. More recently we have been in the process of setting up an advisory board for our programmes made up entirely of participants who have

graduated. This approach means that these 'experts by experience' have their voices heard and influence decision-making going forward.

21. Caritas Hungary: Emerging Settlements Programme

In the nationwide Emerging Settlements Programme, we aim to provide long-term, diagnosis-based assistance in Hungary's most disadvantaged villages, supporting various forms of backyard farming to help families move towards self-sufficiency. In cooperation with the shopping community of the county capital (Pécs), we developed and launched a mini-project this spring (2024), in which we plan together with the participating families, according to the needs of the shopping community, what kind of vegetables will be planted and tended in their gardens during the production period, which will be distributed to the customers in the big city with the help of Caritas, and the proceeds will go to the families participating in the joint cultivation process.

Another example from CH's practice in the framework of Emerging Settlements Programme is that Caritas Hungary has launched and supports clubs in the villages, mainly women's clubs, empowering the club members to structure themselves the themes/topics/goals as well as the activities of the group, to build on the knowledge of local women and to achieve active knowledge sharing between participants. A concrete example can be the cooking clubs, where participating women share recipes that they can use to provide cheap food for their families.

Caritas Hungary, by its participation in the nationwide Emerging Settlements Programme, supports the catching-up processes of the country's most disadvantaged settlements. The aim of the programme is to accompany families with multiple difficulties living in these settlements "from conception until employment", from the first seconds of the human being's life until they reach the point of being employed in a fair way, to increase the chances of children growing up here, to reduce the effects of poverty on families, and to supplement services that are not available to the people living here, with the tools of social work.

The programme is based on the premise that each community and each family faces different difficulties. To solve and alleviate these difficulties, it is necessary, like a good doctor, to first diagnose the situation and identify the problems. The project will therefore provide a detailed diagnosis of each village, followed by an action plan. The village action plans are then supplemented by development plans for each family, which break down the assistance into concrete steps and processes. For example, which families should be involved in the process of debt settlement counselling, which children would need the help of a physiotherapist or a mobility specialist, who could be guided towards self-sufficiency through mentoring on the labour market.

22. Caritas Hungary: Volunteer Training Programme

Caritas Hungary has developed its training programme and is delivering it to volunteer parish caritas groups and full-time professional staff (yearly 2 sessions for staff, 20 sessions to volunteers, 1 summer training camp). An explicit element of the training materials focuses on the conscious application of the participatory principle: involving those in need in the planning, decision-making and implementation processes. An explicit example of this is the diagnosis and planning of activities, programmes and

support processes carried out by parish caritas groups with the participants, e.g. social assistance for a person in need or planning a children's camp.

23. Secours Catholique: Listening to people who have experienced poverty; Building and acting together

Secours Catholique's 2016-2025 national project aims to ensure that "the knowledge of people and groups in precarious situations [is] recognised and shared to create new knowledge and practices".

The aim of this project is to reflect upon and provide responses to the question: What can we learn from all the approaches that aim to gather and value the voices of the poorest people?

This study is a direct response to the internal change targeted by our national project. We have gone to meet the people who are carrying out specific initiatives in the field in order to learn from them. The aim of this project report (see appendix of further documents) is to organise and publicise all this experience within Secours Catholique. It does not offer any new ideas, but it does provide:

- Firstly, elements to help us understand the meaning of this pedagogy: why rely on the words of the poorest people, and take them seriously? (Part 1)
- Secondly, the pedagogical guidelines that emerge from all the approaches based on the words of people experiencing poverty (Part 2).
- Lastly, recommendations relating to tags (Part 3)

In the appendix, you'll find information sheets showing a variety of approaches based on what everyone has to say. These sheets show both the importance of these approaches at the Secours Catholique, and the creativity of the network in moving our project forward. They are there to show what is possible and to stimulate the desire to get started.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

24. Caritas Cuba: General Training Programme (focused on addressing capacity building and training needs)

The volunteers are offered accompaniment and training topics in accordance with their training needs and the characteristics of their environment, which become spaces for feedback, dialogue and listening that foster a spirit of service, optimism for the future and a readjustment to the motivation for life.

This has an impact on the strengthening of the structure of grassroots Caritas, so that communities and parishes have trained and committed work teams to provide a better service to their brothers and sisters in each of the projects, especially those who are most vulnerable.

This journey has endowed the volunteers with the discernment of the reality they live, the revelation of the sense of love and service of God in their daily lives, which impacts on the search for solutions to problems they have in their communities to benefit from the assistance and promotion of people in the worst situation. In this way, these volunteers have become multiplying agents in their communities, families and neighbourhoods of the knowledge learned in the training. The professionalism, competence and love with which they undertake their charitable work can be appreciated in them.

We exemplify the results of this programme's actions in the far-eastern diocese of Cuba: "Guantánamo-Baracoa", where this synergy of work has allowed the revival of the basic Caritas and the creation of new Caritas in rural and intricate communities where they did not exist (Argeo Martínez, Maquey, Maqueicito, Arroyo Hondo, Paraguay, Cecilia), which has been possible thanks to the support of the nuns and priests of these communities. This has strengthened the bonds of fraternity between the diocesan team and these grassroots teams, bringing about a greater rapprochement and feedback, as well as attracting an atmosphere of friendship and trust that transcends the family environment, the neighbourhoods and communities.

This process has led to a greater role in the personal and social development of these people and those they accompany. The aforementioned parish teams and the grassroots teams have also managed to forge closer links with other social actors (teachers, doctors, educational psychologists, nurses, therapists) in the community who support them in training meetings to replicate the training content and materials previously shared by the programme's diocesan teams.

Alliances have also been fostered with other church ministries such as health, penitentiary, catechesis, educators and other leaders of the ecclesial community, a work experience that nourishes communion, participation and mission from this fraternal space in search of renewal as a house and family of God.

25. Caritas Cuba: Learning to grow programme (aimed at people with disabilities and their families)

It brings together people with disabilities and their families (intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities or both, in different degrees of affectation (Down Syndrome; Autistic Spectrum Disorders; Physical-Motor Disabilities, Chronic Encephalopathies, Prader-Willi Syndrome; and others).

Through various psychosocial, educational and recreational interventions, the project promotes the development of independent lifestyles and the social inclusion of these people and their families; the recognition of their dignity, the development of their potential and creative abilities to achieve optimal personal fulfilment and emotional health.

Among the novelties in recent years is the creation of "Day Homes" or "Workshop Houses" where young or older adults with disabilities are accommodated, where they are provided with activities mainly for self-assessment and which allow their families to solve formalities and personal needs. At present, a large number of the parents of these people are over 60 years of age and require time off to attend their own consultations, along with other needs, and do not have a support network to keep their children safe while they receive these benefits. Today there are very well received and accepted experiences of this type in the dioceses of Camagüey and Ciego de Ávila, and the conditions are being prepared to create others in the rest of the dioceses.

It is worth mentioning the scope of community activities such as the "pasacalles", a kind of festival that promotes an inclusive approach to these groups, which are generally excluded from society. These experiences have helped to raise awareness about the work of the programme and to show how much these beneficiaries and their families achieve, as well as attracting a group of people motivated to join the Caritas service.

In 2023, in line with the changes expressed in the country's policy, Caritas Cuba carried out a training process for the families of these beneficiaries in order to introduce them to the singularities of the new Family Code approved in Cuba, which contains rights associated with persons with disabilities. Training and human growth meetings with the families, festivities, exchange of experiences, face-to-face and virtual days were also promoted, which brought joy and dreams, as well as revealing how much more can be done in pursuit of their integration and acceptance, acceptance and support.

This also highlights the synergy with various social and ecclesiastical institutions as a way to achieve greater awareness of the reality, needs and dreams of these people with disabilities in order to see them and appreciate them for their values as people, learning according to their possibilities and life projections. These alliances had greater scope with entities of Public Health, Education and Culture.

26. Caritas Cuba: Emergency and Humanitarian Aid Programme (takes over interventions in emergency situations)

In recent years, the lives of many families have suffered due to the disasters that have disrupted the country, with a great deal of wear and tear and vulnerability in communities. Many of them are affected time and time again by each event.

Effectively channelling humanitarian aid requires constant and up-to-date training to respond quickly and effectively, as well as support from various structures. That is why, when a disaster strikes, parish workers join with the priest and community leaders to identify the most affected areas and families. It is they who offer the first gesture of support, the message of hope and God's embrace in the midst of adversity.

In the dioceses of Pinar del Río and the archdiocese of Havana, which have been hit by strong meteorological phenomena over the last three years, this experience has multiplied its impact, as has the coordination of work with social actors (social workers, doctors and government officials).

Surveys to ascertain the needs of the affected population include the active participation of the affected population, as their voices must be heard, understood and addressed in accordance with their needs and realities. This allows for the collection of accurate information and priorities in the course of the emergency response. The immediate lines of action to help those affected were deployed in two fundamental areas of work: distribution of food aid and distribution of hygiene products. Beneficiary participation was also encouraged during the distribution of relief goods as a principle of organisational transparency, and subsequently in the monitoring and evaluation of the programme, which facilitates the identification of possible improvements and the assurance of their needs.

It is worth mentioning the spirit of genuine solidarity that develops in communities in times of adversity, because in each emergency, people promote various actions to support those affected and also contribute ideas to make donations and accompany the needs of the most disadvantaged, despite the fact that all of them, as a people, suffer various shortages and social anguish.

In all the diocesan and national offices, work is undertaken to accompany people in situations of suffering for a variety of reasons, which require a personalised listening for the implementation of actions such as: accompaniment, support in finding solutions to the circumstances in which they find themselves, legal advice and other fraternal actions with that missionary energy that opens doors to the God of love and the encounter with our neighbour.

27. Caritas Peru: CaCocoa: a fruit that transforms lives in Pucallpa

In the beautiful, hot lands of Pucallpa, the cocoa fruit is a symbol of hope and transformation. In the midst of the lush vegetation, around 500 small producers of organic aromatic cocoa are fighting for a better future, thanks to the collaboration of Caritas Peru in partnership with the Agrarian Cooperative of Aromatic Cocoa Colpa de Loros and funding from the US foundation Food for the Poor.

The project "Improving the living conditions of cocoa producers, applying technological innovations to improve production, institutional strengthening, more inclusive market systems and access to timely financing", started in 2022 and seeks to increase farmers' productivity and income through technological innovations and specialised training. In addition to increasing the average yield from 500 kilos per hectare to 1000 kilos per farmer, members receive ongoing personalised technical assistance, group training, field days and internships on production, environmental management and soil conservation.

It is being developed in more than 10 vulnerable communities, belonging to 4 districts of the province of Padre Abad, such as: Neshuya, Curimaná, Von Humboldt and Huipoca, in the region of Ucayali. Each success story reflects the perseverance and commitment of a community united in pursuit of a better future.

Video of the project en  https://youtu.be/7WfLHknQ8zc?si=MDD_ghOtQPlllcRf



28. Caritas Peru: Food rescue for the care of people in a situation of food insecurity and poverty in northern Peru

Caritas Peru, together with the Diocesan Caritas of Trujillo, Chiclayo and the Diocese of Chulucanas, thanks to the generous support of Caritas Germany, are strengthening the capacities of 14 local governments and communities in disaster preparedness and risk reduction in the face of the El Niño phenomenon through the project "Humanitarian aid to families in La Libertad, Lambayeque and Piura affected by the impact of heavy rains, through the improvement of local management and food rescue".

This project contemplates the development of community mobilisation actions, a training programme and micro-project management, where the Management Committees, duly organised, autonomous and sustainable, are capable of facing the challenges associated with risk management, with the participation and support of community organisations (JASS, Neighbourhood Council, common pots, Glass of Milk, etc.).

This initiative has strengthened 771 people (162 men and 609 women) with workshops on Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis (EDAN Peru), community risk analysis and micro-projects (prioritised by the population). The first projects were oriented to the protection of wells allowing the population to access the main source of water in the community on a permanent basis, delegating the maintenance and operation of the drinking water system to the Junta Administradora de Servicios de Saneamiento (JASS). Seventeen community management committees and 17 community brigades are participating in the project.

In a complementary manner, the Diocesan Caritas of Piura, Trujillo and Chiclayo develop food recovery processes that contribute to face the food security crisis of the most vulnerable populations, through soup kitchens, parish canteens, shelters and other host organisations, with the participation of 5,000 vulnerable people whose income has been reduced as a result of illness, loss of employment or natural events (floods, landslides, etc.).

Mirella Maquera Vidangos, coordinator of the project, reported that from August 2023 to January 2024, 115 tons of fresh and non-perishable food have been recovered from the main wholesale markets, agro-exporters, supermarkets, fruit producers, tuber producers, etc. These results demonstrate the organisational and logistical capacity of Diocesan Caritas in their regions.



Videos produced to raise awareness of the campaign:

- <https://youtu.be/L8TSohs9qJU?si=-NCNZlkkPynRFzxR>
- https://youtu.be/L6xQU7h-vgY?si=hggie7VN7zlrD_C
- https://youtu.be/555Bth9T5ls?si=JUZM3gO_bGuUWhgq

29. Caritas Peru: Healthy and resilient canteens in Cañete and Chincha

Food insecurity is a serious problem in Peru. This situation is aggravated by increasing poverty and the recent health emergency. Official metrics indicate that poverty affects a quarter of the population, who are unable to cover their basic food basket.

In this sense, soup kitchens play an important role as they are social spaces, run mainly by women, which mitigate the effects of poverty and food insecurity for hundreds of people in vulnerable situations. This is why this project was created to improve the quality of the service offered by the soup kitchens, that is, to serve nutritious, healthy and low-cost meals to the people and families who come to them to eat.

The project carried out actions to improve infrastructure conditions, equipment and access to water and sewage services. In addition, bio-gardens have been implemented and work has been done on the specific skills of the Management Committees and the cook members for the management of the soup kitchen, food handling and preparation of nutritious meals; all in hygienic and healthy conditions.

This initiative was carried out in 7 soup kitchens in the AA. HH. of San Vicente de Cañete and Chincha. The project actions were implemented together with 40 women leaders and 262 members.

The project was co-implemented with the Diocesan Caritas of Ica and Cañete, Yauyos and Huarochiri thanks to the support of PERU LNG from 2022 to 2023.



NORTH AMERICA

30. Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA): Engagement with, and empowerment of, clients

The majority of the 168 diocesan member agencies (Caritas) within Catholic Charities USA employ various methods to actively involve clients and individuals living in poverty in designing, implementing and evaluating programs and services. Diocesan Catholic Charities (Caritas) agencies utilise client advisory boards, focus groups, and surveys to ensure that those living in poverty can directly impact and influence the community services provided. For instance, Catholic Charities agencies across the United States, including in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Baltimore, Maryland, Boston, Massachusetts, and San Antonio, Texas, have empowered individuals living in poverty to assist in designing "client choice pantries." These pantries allow families to choose suitable and desired foods for their households in a shopping-like experience, thereby enhancing dignity and choice in food assistance programs. This input from those served also changed program service hours to include weekends and evenings, the location of program sites, and the types of services offered.

Approximately 25% of our 168-member Catholic Charities (Caritas) agencies play a direct role in executing the national Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) empowerment process within their respective dioceses. This initiative focuses on identifying, collaborating with, funding, and working alongside community institutions governed predominantly by low-income individuals aimed at social change. These institutions are actively involved in community organizing and development activities such as banking practices, land development, housing construction, and neighbourhood planning. Led by those who live in poverty, these groups undertake structural responses to local poverty issues with the backing of Caritas agencies.

A notable instance of this collaborative effort occurred in Youngstown, Ohio, where the local diocesan Catholic Charities (Caritas) agency supported several CCHD-funded groups. These groups successfully utilized the federal Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) to compel banks to eliminate unfair barriers to banking, including home, commercial, and personal loans that had previously hindered low-income individuals. The leadership of these low-income individuals was crucial in abolishing "redlining" practices in their community, thereby opening previously denied access to capital.

31. Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA): Pilot inter-faith and collaborative project for grassroots involvement

Twelve (12) Catholic Charities USA member diocesan Caritas agencies are modeling a local community engagement process, called TeamUp. This inter-faith and inter-community group process focuses on direct engagement in developing and implementing local projects and processes aimed at bringing persons together to build bridges and engage in peacebuilding exercises.

The TeamUp Bridgebuilding Pilot Project often implements the "see, judge, act" methodology.

Catholic Charities agencies committed to bridgebuilding begin by identifying the needs within their communities. In this initial "see" phase, they recognize the complex challenges they aim to address through their programs and services. However, in the context of bridgebuilding, there is an understanding that individuals come from diverse identities and perspectives. The primary goal in

bridgebuilding is to respect those with whom there may be disagreements. This respect sets the stage for sharing the experiences of those involved, providing an opportunity to analyze the context and relate to others.

This leads to the "judge" phase, where internal reflections consider the situation and its impact on the community. Agencies reflect on the "signs of the times in the light of the Gospel" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 4), encouraging deep thought and aiming to find common ground or shared values with those with differing views.

The final "act" phase involves collaboration across differences. Even if there is not full agreement, there is a collective commitment to work towards social goods that benefit those most impacted by the issues. This cooperative effort can foster change at individual, community, and systemic levels, embodying the essence of bridgebuilding in action.

Some examples include:

a) Santa Clara, California: The Congreso del Pueblo concept using Promotoras (community workers who are both paid and volunteer) who represent people from the affected groups in the creation of services and programs is a model that engages people in poverty but was developed prior to the Synodal Process. The bridging work completed included cross-cultural relationship building so that the engagement of people experiencing poverty expanded from primarily those of Latino background to also embrace those who are Asian, specifically Vietnamese. This project created the first step by using cultural events to align these ethnic groups to achieve shared goals both within the Catholic Church and reaching out to engage other faith traditions in designing and implementing responses to needs identified. The step of creating the Congreso is how those most affected can fully participate in both priorities and methods to achieve the desired outcomes.

b) San Diego, California: The first step in bridgebuilding for this project demonstrated synodal processes. One of the goals of the synod in this diocese was to reduce the silos between the schools, parishes, and other departments. The Catholic Charities agency established a trust-building process fashioned after the synodal concepts to bring together deacons and their wives to prioritize the programs and services they determined as needed in their parishes and communities. The deacons came from parishes representing all income levels, with some deacon families having lower incomes. The priorities were established with this group and then shared internally with the staff of Catholic Charities and with a group of deacons who wished to continue this work. The process is seen as a multi-year endeavor that will require at least an additional 3 years. This engagement with the community encourages leadership from those affected by the issues identified in this first year.

32. Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA): The See, Judge, Act Methodology in national and local strategic planning processes

Catholic Charities USA explicitly utilizes the "see, judge, act" methodology in two specific ways:

National Strategic Planning: In 1972, the Catholic Charities USA "Cadre Report" articulated the tripartite mission of Catholic Charities: serving those in need, advocating for social justice, and convening the Church and others of goodwill to do the same. The report, officially titled "Toward a Renewed Catholic Charities Movement," introduced the "see, judge, act" methodology, which has since

become a cornerstone of the organization's strategic approach. This methodology has underpinned major strategic initiatives such as VISION 2000 (1993-2010), the Campaign to Reduce Poverty (2010-2017), and the New Moment (2017-2024). In its current strategic planning cycle, Catholic Charities USA is incorporating a synodal process that explicitly utilizes the "see, judge, act" method, reinforcing its commitment to a participatory and reflective approach in addressing its challenges and opportunities.

Local Strategic Planning: Catholic Charities USA offers strategic planning support, staff development, and governance guidance to its 168 diocesan member Caritas agencies. The organization consistently employs the "see, judge, act" methodology as a central analytical and decision-making tool. This method is integral to the organization's approach to supporting local Caritas agencies in effectively meeting their mission and objectives.

33. Catholic Relief Services (CRS): The Sahel Peace Initiative (SPI)

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the regional Catholic Church of West Africa are united in responding to the catastrophic and expanding violence plaguing the Sahel. The Sahel Peace Initiative (SPI) is building peace and restoring hope in the region by scaling up the impact and visibility of Church-catalyzed peacebuilding initiatives in the Sahel. These efforts are amplifying the peaceful voice and convening power of the local Church while simultaneously responding to the acute needs of displaced and vulnerable families.

Led by Bishops in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, and Niger, SPI has:

- Engaged 4,000+ community members in collective community building actions such as dialogues, community service, and peaceful marches;
- Delivered life-saving humanitarian assistance to 27,300 individuals;
- Trained a network of over 700 youth as peace ambassadors;
- Featured in 100+ media articles;
- Engaged in 10 high-level advocacy meetings;
- Hosted 6 live advocacy events;
- Trained 112 regional journalists in conflict sensitive reporting.

34. Catholic Relief Services (CRS): Transformative Pathways: An In-depth Look at Social Cohesion Integration in DRC's Savings & Internal Lending (SILC) Program

Catholic Relief Services in the Democratic Republic of Congo (CRS DRC) together with CRS' Strategic Change Platform 1: Fostering Just and Cohesive Society conducted research of the outcomes resulting from the integration of social cohesion programming into the Integrated Youth Development Activity (IYDA) funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and led by the Education Development Center (EDC).

The IYDA project aimed to nurture positive engagement and resilience in youth from the North and South Kivu regions of the DRC. It achieved this through various educational activities, vocational training, life skills instruction, and participation in Saving and Internal Lending Community (SILC) groups. In the project's final year, CRS recognized the impact of tension and conflict on these youth SILC groups and utilized additional resources to incorporate social cohesion initiatives. This

intervention reached 2,358 young SILC members across 83 groups, providing them with training in social cohesion and peaceful conflict resolution. To reinforce these teachings, field agents made monthly visits to the 83 SILC groups, overseeing both SILC and social cohesion interventions.

The research findings highlight the impact of enhanced social cohesion on SILC participation. Improvements in trust and interdependence are noticeable in both treatment and control zones. In the treatment zone, 96.0% of participants reported successful resolution of internal conflicts within their SILC groups, surpassing the 83.6% reported in the control zone. This 13.0% mid-term increase underscores the effectiveness of improved social cohesion in conflict resolution. The training improved youth skills in conflict recognition and resolution and led to a rise in the practice of these skills during SILC group meetings. Additionally, enhanced social cohesion positively influenced decision-making within SILC groups, promoting more collaborative and informed decision-making processes.

The integration of social cohesion into SILC programming yielded positive economic outcomes. Conflict management and social cohesion training directly influence attitudes and practices, active SILC engagement, increased savings and credit use, and collaborative productivity. These changes cultivate harmonious coexistence and have a positive effect on other sectoral results, including the economic resilience of conflict-affected youth.

35. Catholic Relief Services (CRS): Building Bridges: Promoting social cohesion in Education – A case study from Ain Shams, Egypt

In 2022, CRS Egypt, in collaboration with the CRS's Strategic Change Platform 1: Fostering Just and Cohesive Society, embarked on an inspiring pilot project. The primary objective was to delve into the transformative effects of social cohesion interventions on fostering trust between vulnerable host and refugee communities in Ain Shams, Egypt. Additionally, the project aimed to evaluate the extent to which these interventions contributed to enhancing educational performance among children in both communities, operating within the framework of the UNHCR Education project.

Egypt is home to a significant number of registered refugees and asylum seekers, including individuals from Syria, Sudan, Eritrea, South Sudan, and Ethiopia. In poorer areas of Greater Cairo, such as Ain Shams, refugees often face protection risks and challenges within the educational system. Discrimination, bullying, and various forms of violence create barriers to integration and social cohesion between refugee and vulnerable Egyptian communities.

To address these challenges, a pilot project was initiated to integrate social cohesion objectives into education programming, with a focus on fostering cohesion and inclusion. Local collaboration was vital and the project ensured that key focal point persons from both host and refugee communities were equally represented. These individuals possessed contextual knowledge, cultural familiarity, and the necessary skills to undertake social cohesion activities effectively.

The evaluation of the pilot project yielded valuable insights into the effects of social cohesion interventions on community dynamics and educational performance. The results demonstrated positive outcomes:

- 51% of participants reported increased trust in members of the other community.

- 62% of participants reported improved educational performance for themselves or their children, attributing it to feeling supported by peers from the other identity group.
- 27% of participants demonstrated increased self-efficacy and readiness to engage with the other identity group.
- 76% of participants experienced increased support within their own intra-group members.
- 94% of participants reported positive experiences with community members from other identity groups.

Engagement and participation were critical factors for success. Involving a wide range of community members as facilitators and participants ensured a comprehensive and inclusive approach. Additionally, capacity building for facilitators played a significant role in implementing social cohesion activities effectively and establishing them as positive role models within the communities.

The pilot project in Ain Shams, Egypt, conducted in 2022, had a follow-up phase in 2023. The findings and insights from the initial pilot will be combined with the outcomes of the subsequent phase. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the impact of social cohesion interventions over time and enables the project to refine strategies and promote integration and educational outcomes.