

Media Release

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Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand launches annual Lent appeal amid growing global crises

The Catholic agency for justice, peace, and development is asking for help in bringing humanitarian and development assistance to those who need it.

WELLINGTON - Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand is calling on Kiwi Catholics to support its annual Lent Appeal, as the need for humanitarian aid continues to rise across the globe.

The Bishops Lenten Appeal, which officially began today, runs throughout Lent, a sacred time for Catholics. Funds raised will support vulnerable communities facing crisis and disaster.

Donations can be [made online](#), or through local parishes.

Caritas – helping communities recover and rebuild

This year's appeal [highlights the story of Mavae and her family](#) from Tonga, who survived the devastating tsunami triggered by the Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption in January 2022.

In an instant, their lives were turned upside down by the tsunami, which destroyed lives, livelihoods, and hundreds of homes. In the chaos, Mavae feared for her family. When she realized that her teenage sons were missing, her heart sank. **“I told my husband that if we reached the main road and I still hadn't seen my boys, he'd have to take our daughters and leave. I couldn't go without my sons.”**

Thankfully, Mavae and her family were reunited and found safety together. But the tsunami washed away everything that she and her community had worked for.

Thanks to Caritas supporters, Mavae's family received emergency aid, including food and shelter, and they were able to start rebuilding their lives. Today, Mavae and her family have a home again, and they know they are not alone.

“The support we received showed we were loved,” said Mavae.

Funds from the Lent Appeal will continue to support families like

Mavae's all over the globe, helping them to recover from disasters and build resilience against future crises.

There before, during and after emergencies

Last year Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand helped more than 427,000 people with immediate humanitarian emergency assistance in countries as diverse as Gaza, Lebanon, Bangladesh and Ukraine.

At the same time, it provided long-term development assistance to more than 131,000 people, through such activities as improving livelihoods, upgrading water and sanitation systems, offering vocational training, supplying health and nutrition lessons, and aiding with climate change adaptation. Most of these activities took place across the Pacific and Asia.

Increasing need as aid budgets face pressure

"This year's Lent Appeal is particularly crucial," says Caritas Chief Executive Mena Antonio. "We are witnessing increasing instability and suffering across the globe, while at the same time, wealthier nations are showing reluctance to meet their obligations to the most vulnerable. The recent shutdown of USAID funding is a stark example, and I am sad to say it will place immense pressure on Pacific communities already struggling with the realities of climate change."

The USAID shutdown comes at a time when multiple governments are reducing aid spending, and this has worsened challenges for Pacific communities already struggling with climate threats, such as rising sea levels, extreme weather, and food insecurity. This week Caritas Internationalis [condemned the wave of drastic cuts](#) to international development assistance sweeping through the world's richest countries.

The appeal runs until Easter. To support the Caritas Lent Appeal, visit www.caritas.org.nz/lent.

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Notes to editors

Photo 1 caption: Mavae, who lives in Tonga, had her life turned upside down when the country was struck by a massive tsunami in January 2022.

Photo 2: Following the 2022 Tonga Tsunami Mavae and her family received emergency aid, food and shelter from Caritas - and were able to start rebuilding their lives.

Photo credit: Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand

Interviews available on request

Caritas is the world's second largest humanitarian network, with more

than 160 members across 200 countries and territories. We are working for a world free of poverty and injustice through community development, advocacy, education, and emergency relief. Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand is a vital member of the global Caritas Internationalis network and a key member of the Caritas Oceania regional network. www.caritas.org.nz

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