

UNITINGWORLD

UPDATE
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HOPE

is what we do



UnitingWorld
connecting communities for life

UnitingWorld is the international aid and partnerships agency of the United Church in Australia. Together we work for a world where lives are whole and hopeful, free from poverty and injustice.

Because every person matters.

HOPE

is what we do

In the face of devastating humanitarian crises, cuts to foreign aid, growing authoritarianism and environmental degradation, our church partners continue to lead with hope and courage.

When Cyclone Senyar tore through **Sumatra, Indonesia** in November, killing more than 1,200 people and washing away entire villages. Survivors were left desperately short of food, water and shelter, but our church partners in neighbouring areas collected goods and donations and sent them to the affected provinces. Churches opened their doors, shared what they had, and stayed long after the cameras left.

In **Bali**, our church partners are responding to climate migrants from the nearby island of **Sumba** with care rather than fear, offering connection, practical support and dignity to families seeking stability. They are even expanding their poverty alleviation project into Sumba in partnership with the local church to help people before they're forced to migrate! They have also opened a sustainable café as part of their work to curb Indonesia's crippling pollution problem, serving their community and teaching sustainability at the same time!

In **West Timor**, hope looks like seedlings in the ground. More than 6,000 trees and mangroves have been planted to restore fragile landscapes. At the same time, our church partners are addressing chronic malnutrition among children and mothers through community health initiatives and kitchen gardens. The program is now expanding into new villages in Alor and Rote so more families can grow diverse, nutritious food close to home.

In **Maluku**, our church partners hosted multi-faith prayers for the victims of the Bondi massacre at the request of Muslim leaders in Ambon. Strong relationships between faiths are reflected in the



In communities in Timor-Leste where our partners have been working, child malnutrition has dropped to zero!

long-running UnitingWorld-supported peacebuilding project to rebuild trust after years of sectarian conflict. The project has since transitioned to address chronic food insecurity and childhood stunting and is expanding to new villages this year.

In **Timor-Leste**, longer dry seasons and heavier rains are destroying food gardens. Our partners are helping farmers diversify crops, improve water systems and restore degraded land. (Read more on page 6)

In **India's Punjab region**, the worst flooding in four decades inundated 1,400 villages and vast stretches of farmland. Our church partners used boats to deliver vital supplies to stranded families. And despite increasing restrictions to Christian outreach under the Modi Government, our partners continue to stand with Dalit and marginalised communities facing discrimination, strengthening livelihoods and restoring dignity.

In **India's Durgapur region**, study centres in ten rural communities, previously supported by UnitingWorld, are now entirely self-sufficient, owned and funded by their communities.

In **Vanuatu**, hope is preparing before disaster strikes. On the island of Tanna, our partner, the Presbyterian Church in Vanuatu, has launched an Anticipatory Action Project that equips local leaders and families to be disaster ready. More than 1,300 people have attended

awareness sessions, learning practical skills, identifying how to protect their most vulnerable neighbours, and building a local coordination network.

In the **Philippines**, twin typhoons killed more than 300 people and displaced half a million. Our partner, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, led both disaster response and peaceful ecumenical advocacy, speaking out against government corruption that has weakened disaster preparedness and left communities exposed. Love and justice, side by side.

In **Sri Lanka**, when Cyclone Dityah killed 600 people and caused US\$4 billion in damage, the Methodist Church stretched already-thin resources to reach those most in need. As families continue to navigate economic crisis and recovery, churches are supporting livelihoods and food security so hardship does not become despair.

Across our region, this is what hope looks like. Boats carrying supplies. Churches opening their doors. Mangroves restored. Children nourished. Corruption challenged. Forests defended. Homes strengthened before the storm.

Thank you for standing with our partners. Your prayers and generosity help turn hope into action.

New project takes roots in former tea plantation

UnitingWorld is partnering with the Church of North India - Diocese of Eastern Himalaya to support a tea plantation community in India's Darjeeling region. A community of 190 people are still recovering from a plantation closure that stripped them of income, housing and food security overnight. With few transferable skills and increasingly severe climate impacts, including heavy rains, landslides and soil erosion, families have struggled to rebuild their livelihoods.

Senior Project Officer Rose Donovan recently facilitated a four-day consultation and planning workshop with Diocese staff and community members to design a project to help people adapt to the changing climate

and find alternative incomes.

"The community took us on a very intimate walk, showing us how they grow their food, their water sources and the landslides scattered throughout the area, and welcoming us into their homes," said Rose.

"They shared their goals and dreams for their community, each family longing to shape their own future."

The Diocese has already employed a local woman as field officer. She had been planning to migrate more than three hours away in search of work, but can now stay and serve her own community.

Over the next three years, our partners will be helping families through climate-resilient farming, improved livestock



management and access to markets, as well as vocational training and career guidance for young people. They will also be working with the entire community on a disaster preparedness plan, including building awareness on drainage issues, good land management and how to reduce landslide risks.

Diocese Program Manager Sanjay Khaling said, *"the community is enthusiastic about working together, and while it is a huge learning process, they are ready to get started."*



Bali church chooses compassion over fear

When migrants suddenly started turning up in Bali from the nearby island of Sumba, many people assumed the worst.

Would they be a strain on housing, jobs and social harmony? One more group of outsiders to be tolerated or pushed aside? But for Rev Betha and her team at MBM*, the arrivals weren't a problem to be solved but an opportunity to love their neighbours in need.

"In our outreach to new migrants, they shared that the primary driving factor for leaving Sumba to seek work in Bali was extreme poverty," Rev Betha explained.

"Their condition is largely caused by drought, infertile land and limited access to water, which make it difficult for villagers to make a living." Climate change sits at the centre of this shared challenge.

"These changes have led to reduced rainfall and prolonged dry seasons, resulting in drought and crop failure," Rev Betha says, with ripple effects across health, livelihoods and family safety.

For many years, MBM has worked alongside vulnerable communities in Bali. But when Rev Betha stepped into leadership in 2023, she felt called to respond more deeply to the plight of new migrants.

"Climate change and poverty have driven many people from Sumba to migrate to Bali in search of work, often without adequate skills or an understanding of cultural differences," she says.

"As a result, many Sumbanese migrants in Bali face a type of 'double' poverty. First in their places of origin, and again in their destination areas. These realities strengthened our conviction at MBM that we must expand our ministry to Sumba."

As well as supporting families who have already migrated, MBM devised a plan to help people still at home in Sumba, before they become stuck in Bali facing hostility and fewer opportunities.

MBM has partnered with UnitingWorld and the Sumba Christian Church to make this work possible, building trust through shared faith.

"We hold the conviction that it is God who sends us to accompany the vulnerable and the poor with compassion," Rev Betha reflects.

"We believe that God goes before this good plan and faithfully sustains our work."

We will be sharing more about this growing partnership, and ways to support the project, later in the year. Please uphold Rev Betha and her team in prayer.

***MBM is the development agency of our partner, the Protestant Christian Church in Bali.**

Our impact together

Our Annual Report for July 2024-June 2025 shares stories of hope and impact, all made possible through your generous support and the determination of our partners in the Pacific, Asia and Africa. You can read the full report at unitingworld.org.au/AR-FY25



Who we reached
117,745

people served by our projects, including

65,321
women and girls

27,849
children

2,595
people with disabilities



Working with partners

29
projects

22
partners

15
countries

Our project impacts

Read the full stories in the Annual Report



Food security and reliable water

3,302 people have gained access to enough food
7,789 people have better access to clean water



Livelihoods and income opportunities

1,357 people participated in a savings group



Working with nature to protect communities

7,949 trees and mangroves planted



Gender equality

813 women raised to leadership roles



Disaster preparedness and emergency response

4,270 people engaged in disaster risk reduction strategies or climate change adaptation plans



Disability inclusion

2,595 people with disabilities took part in our projects

Advocacy

We have stepped up our advocacy for climate action, urging greater understanding of the unique and prophetic role that Christians can play at the intersection of poverty and climate change.





This Lent, stand with families on the front line of a changing climate.

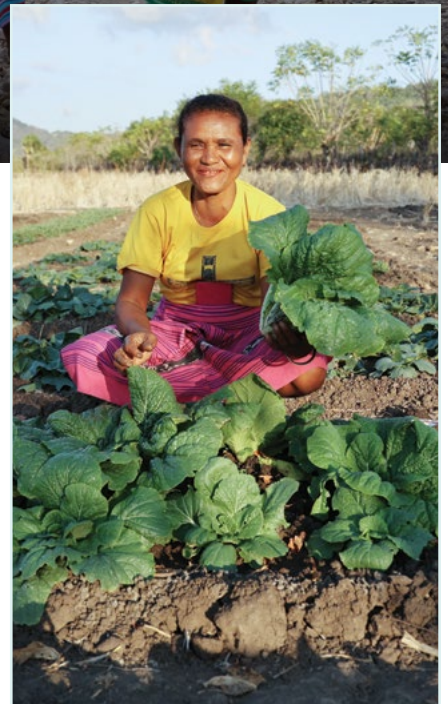
Our world needs a movement of committed, courageous discipleship. During Lent, join Christians from across Australia as we share in what God is doing among our neighbours fighting poverty in the face of a changing climate.

In Timor-Leste, Australia's nearest neighbour and the poorest country in our region, climate change is causing extreme weather - both unseasonal drought and catastrophic flooding, destroying crops that families depend on for food and income. One in four people is hungry. Half of all children are stunted due to failed crops and lack of clean water. **But there is hope to share!**



Watch how Martha's life was transformed through the work of UnitingWorld partner FUSONA on the Lent Event website.

Find out more, donate or sign up your church at www.lentevent.com.au



Contemplating the life of Jesus during Lent is a powerful reminder that God loves us and will never abandon us. At the same time, God calls us not to be bystanders to the suffering in our world, but to live lives of love and justice.

But as for you... hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God.

Hosea 12:6

Do you have family or friends who want to support action on poverty and climate justice too?

Check out **40 for the Future** – a simple challenge you can easily share with others. Choose a climate challenge - change the way you eat, travel, shop or use energy for 40 days. Invite others to donate to support those who are living with less in the face of immense climate challenges. You can take part as an individual or a team.

www.40forthefuture.com.au



You give hope!

Lachlan grew up surrounded by people who care about the world around them.

In a family that was deeply engaged at Brisbane West Uniting Church, Lachlan remembers there always being a call to help people who didn't have many of the things he took for granted.

"My family was always fundraising for different missions of the church," he says. "And I found it inspiring to see people in the community always travelling across Australia or overseas to love and serve anyone who needs help."

It was an image that stuck with him.

In school geography class he learned about water scarcity, so in 2019 he organised his church to fundraise for water wells through UnitingWorld.

"The more I learned about the world around me, the more I realised how much there was to do to help," he reflects.

When the devastating 2019 droughts and bushfires hit, followed by COVID-19, Lachlan and his church stepped up.

"During crises like that, the solutions become so clear," he says.

"During the pandemic, our church set up a food bank to help people who lost their jobs, and we fundraised to support struggling farmers in Roma and Mitchell."

His passion led him to discover our Everything in Common Gift Catalogue,



Thank you to the churches across Australia that hosted an Everything in Common stall this year! Inspired by the radical generosity of the early Church described in Acts (2:44-45), you helped us raise more than \$300,000 to support the vital work of our partners fighting poverty and building hope.

and he now champions his church gift stall each Christmas.

"I love being able to support really tangible things like clean water, food gardens and school books," he says. Now studying at university, Lachlan hasn't lost his heart to help others, pursuing an International Studies degree and volunteering as often as he can.

"I think people like me should use their abilities, skills and privilege to make a difference, to help people wherever there's a need."

Amen!



When generosity becomes a habit

Last year, we invited supporters to become Global Neighbours through monthly giving. The response was deeply encouraging!

Over 60 people like you stepped forward to put their generosity on repeat. Each one choosing connection over distance, solidarity over indifference. Nothing is more encouraging and impactful than a growing community of people committed to showing up, month after month, to change the lives of others for the better.

In a world shaped by complex injustice and long-term challenges, regular giving matters. It gives our international partners the stability they need to plan well, respond quickly and keep working for change long after headlines fade.

The invitation is still open.

Becoming a Global Neighbour is a simple way to share the load, strengthen our partnerships and help build a more just and equitable global neighbourhood.



Please join us at

www.unitingworld.org.au/globalneighbour



Australia holds the line on aid

Foreign Minister Penny Wong with delegates of the Pacific Australian Emerging Leaders Summit (PAELS) supported by UnitingWorld in November 2025)

Right now, humanitarians the world over are operating with far less support. A global retreat from foreign aid is happening at precisely the wrong moment.

Early last year, the United States closed USAID and slashed its foreign aid budget

by more than 80 percent. Modelling from Boston University suggests this has already caused 600,000 deaths, two-thirds of them children. Other major funders followed: Germany cut aid by 50%, the UK by 40% and France by 37%, all diverted to record defence spending.

We are thankful that Australia’s aid budget was saved from cuts, in no small part by a movement of faithful Christians and church institutions refusing to see aid as discretionary spending, but as an extension of our shared values.

If you added your voice through the Safer World For All campaign, contacted your Member of Parliament, or prayed for and supported us and our partners as they advocated in Canberra – thank you!

There’s still a long way to go. Australia’s foreign aid remains at a historic low of just 0.5 per cent of the federal budget, well below what’s needed to meet humanitarian and development needs around the world. We will continue to urge the government to restore Australian aid to the modest level of 1% of the Federal Budget, a small step that would have a huge impact.

You can help by joining the campaign at www.saferworld.org.au

From the National Director

“A world of fortresses will be poorer, more fragile and less sustainable.”

It was acclaimed as the most important foreign policy speech in years. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney chose to speak with unusual candour in his address at the World Economic Forum in Davos this year.

“We knew the story of the international rules-based order was partially false” he said, “that the strongest would exempt themselves when convenient.” He called out what the global south has always known – that the fairness of that order was a collective illusion, and that it has always been weaponised against the powerless.

We now live in a world where superpowers exert military might and economic coercion with flagrant indifference. Whatever illusion we shared, it is now shattered. Carney called on ‘middle power’ nations to build something better, an order grounded in human rights, solidarity, and the dignity of every nation. I look forward to how Australia might step up to this invitation.

But as Christ-followers we do not put our faith in empires. Even well-meaning ones.

The value of each human life, the duty of the strong to care for the weak, to love without condition – these are Jesus’ teachings. Are we ready to hold to them, even when the world seems to be forgetting?

Whenever I meet with our church partners and supporters, I find my answer. Whether among old friends or new partners, in the wealthiest cities here at home or the poorest communities of India, Timor-Leste or the Pacific, sitting on mats under trees, or in cafes, the word that rings true is family. Even when I visit for the first time, it always feels like coming home. The spirit of God is always there, always weaving us together, gently urging our hearts to act with love and justice.

We don’t build fortresses, we build tables to gather around. Not an alliance for power, but a living community of people, across cultures, languages and oceans. People who choose each other. Who keep showing up. Who believe, as



Jesus told us, that how we treat the most vulnerable among us is the truest measure of who we are in Christ.

You and I are part of this family, a taste of the kin-dom that Jesus proclaimed was at hand. So the question we face is this: can we hold onto hope and each other, and keep loving with courage and generosity?

Thanks for being with us.

Dr Sureka Goringe
National Director
UnitingWorld

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UnitingWorld PO Box A2266, Sydney South NSW 1235
ABN 47 817 183 926 Telephone 1800 998 122

info@unitingworld.org.au
www.unitingworld.org.au