

Caritas Australia supports communities in Timor-Leste to prepare for disaster.

Caritas Australia and The Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations (CAN DO) have been working to support communities in Timor-Leste as they face the impacts of climate change.

Many families in Timor-Leste are facing hunger with nearly half the population living below the poverty line. Many children are malnourished with 47% of children under 5 years of age experiencing stunted growth.

The Caritas Australia and CAN DO program in Timor-Leste saw young people receive drought resilience training as well as attend community awareness sessions on El Nino – a weather event typified by drought that is causing widespread food insecurity in the region. Some dioceses also received kitchen garden training sessions, as well as food parcels, drought resistant seeds and safe food storage containers.

Melville Fernandez, Humanitarian Emergencies Associate Director at Caritas Australia said, “Climate-related weather events in Timor-Leste and the Pacific are only increasing, making disaster preparedness a crucial part of building resilience into these communities. Many of these communities are already struggling with high levels of poverty and food insecurity, so when period of drought and flood impact them the results can be devastating.”

“Disaster READY works to help communities get ahead of that, by arming them with the knowledge, skills and even the seeds required to continue producing food and generating an income even when weather events like El Nino threaten their livelihoods” Melville Fernandez concluded.

Disaster READY is the flagship program of the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP), a ten-year partnership started in 2017 between the Australian Government and Australian NGOs, focussed on disaster resilience across the Pacific and Timor-Leste.

The Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations (CAN DO) is a group of eight faith-based aid and development agencies, led by Caritas Australia. CAN DO is crucial to realising the vision of Disaster READY, as it ensures programs can be activated through the combined networks of all church partners.

In Timor-Leste, the Disaster READY program is implemented by local partners including the Caritas Diocese of Dili, the Caritas Diocese of Maliana, the Caritas Diocese of Baucau, ADRA Timor-Leste, Church World Service Timor-Leste, Fundasaun Sosial Naroman and Sharis Haburas Comunidade.

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