THE BIG WATER WALK

Case Studies | Solomon Islands



Patricia is a 14-year-old girl from a rural village in Malaita, Solomon Islands.

As the eldest child in her family, Patricia faced the daily challenge of collecting water. Before her community had easier access to clean water, she spent up to two hours each day walking long distances through a dense and hilly rainforest to bring water home.

Carrying heavy buckets home was exhausting, and the effort often left her too tired to complete her homework. These challenges disrupted her education, and last year she decided to stop attending school.

Lack of access to water is a common issue across Solomon Islands with more than 1 in 4 people without access to basic drinking water services. With the support of the Common Home project, implemented by the Catholic Diocese of Auki, a new water system has been installed in Patricia's village, improving her wellbeing significantly. She now spends less time collecting water and more time helping her family, playing with friends, and supporting her younger siblings with their learning. Daily tasks like cleaning and cooking have also become easier.

With renewed hope and more time to focus on her future, Patricia plans to return to school next year. Motivated by a desire to help others and make a positive difference in her community, she wants to one day become a teacher like her father.

Patricia used to walk through a dense forest every day to collect water to bring home to her family.
Photo: Caritas Australia.

THE BIG WATER WALK

Case Studies | Tanzania



You might remember Sisilia from Project Compassion 2026!

Sisilia, aged 13, lives with her mother and siblings in a remote village in northern Tanzania. Life has been difficult since her father passed away when she was a baby. She walked up to 30 minutes, three times a day, to fetch water from a dirty canal. The water was unsafe, causing frequent illness, and the long walks left Sisilia exhausted, fearful of wild animals and struggling to focus on her studies.

With support from the A+ Successor Project, her school and village now have clean water taps. This means it takes Sisilia just two minutes to collect water from a tap near her house, reducing the risks she faced and giving her more time for learning. Access to safe water has also improved health, hygiene and nutrition for her school community. Teachers and students can drink clean water, maintain hygiene, and grow food in the school garden.

Sisilia has also joined a SWASH Club, where she learned about hygiene, sanitation, nutrition and child rights. She now confidently shares this knowledge with peers, parents and community members, even performing songs and demonstrations to promote good practices. This leadership has empowered her to advocate for children's education and wellbeing in her community.

Despite many hardships, Sisilia remains determined to succeed. Her favourite subjects are Science, English and Maths, and she dreams of becoming a pilot. With more time to study and improved living conditions, she hopes to build a safer, stronger home for her family and a brighter future for herself.

Sisilia collecting water from a new tap installed near her house. Photo: Caritas Australia.

THE BIG WATER WALK

Case Studies | Samoa



Toefuata'iga's primary school in Upolu, Samoa, grappled with severe water scarcity that disrupted education and jeopardised students' health. Toefuata'iga and her classmates faced frequent early dismissals and missed lessons due to a lack of clean water. Teachers often had to leave the school to fetch water from nearby homes, adding strain to the staff and local community. The absence of a reliable water source also led to compromised hygiene, increasing the risk of dehydration and waterborne diseases, which affected students' health.

The situation changed dramatically when Caritas Samoa, a partner of Caritas Australia, installed a 10,000 litre water tank at the school. This new water source enabled the school to maintain regular class schedules, improving both educational outcomes and student health. Attendance and enrolment numbers surged, as parents no longer worried about sending their children to a school without access to clean water. The tank also alleviated financial and logistical burdens on teachers and nearby families, allowing the school community to focus on education rather than the constant struggle for water.

Toefuata'iga and her classmates can now drink from their school's water tank. Photo: Caritas Australia.

THE BIG WATER WALK

Case Studies | Tanzania



Oliva lives in northern Tanzania with her husband and four children.

Oliva runs a kiosk, selling grocery products and serving tea and snacks. To make ends meet, she also works as a casual labourer on local onion farms.

Oliva and her community did not have easy access to clean water. They needed to travel 10 kilometres to fetch water from unprotected wells in the village.

With the support of Caritas Australia's local partner organisation, Diocese of Mbulu Development Department (DMDD), a water pump was installed in the community so families have water closer to their homes.

"Improved access to safe and clean water plays the greatest role in improving my family's life as we are now able to fetch water at a short distance of 500 metres. Close access to water has also led me to save time for doing other economic activities inside and outside the household," says Oliva.

Improved access to irrigation infrastructure has also increased food production, improving food security for families.

Oliva collecting water to bring home. Photo: August Lucky/Caritas Australia.

THE BIG WATER WALK

Case Studies | Solomon Islands



Margret teaches students who are deaf at a vocational school in the Solomon Islands. Margret was born deaf herself, so she knows the challenges many of her students face in pursuing their education and employment.

An ongoing challenge for students at her school was sourcing water. The school's four small tanks always ran out of water during the dry season. This meant that the school had a shortage of water for half the year.

Students and teachers had to walk off campus, twice every day, to collect water. With Caritas Australia's support, Margret's school was able to install water tanks, repair school property and help to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Now, the school can maintain its own water supply and is also boosting food security by increasing its agricultural production.

"Water is always available now for drinking, washing, bathing, gardening. Water is so important for our life, our music and our culture," Margret said.

Margret washing her hands using the new water tank. Photo: Neil Nuia/Caritas Australia.

THE BIG WATER WALK

Case Studies | Tanzania



Maria lives in a village in northern Tanzania, in a region with long-term food and water insecurity. With little way of earning a sustainable income, it was a daily struggle for Maria and her husband to feed their young family. Maria had to walk a 4 kilometre round trip to fetch water for her household.

With the support of Caritas Australia's local partner, Diocese of Mbulu Development Department (DMDD), Maria's community was able to install a new borehole closer to the village so that they no longer have to walk long distances to access safe, clean water.

Improved irrigation also boosted food production, enabling Maria's family to have enough to eat all year round, as well as increasing their income.

"We have increased happiness in our family as we are able to fulfil basic needs," Maria says. ***"In the future, I would like have a dairy cow, to build a good house and I want my children to do well in school so they can get good jobs and have a good future."***

Maria collecting water from a new borehole in her village. Photo: August Lucky/Caritas Australia.

THE BIG WATER WALK

Case Studies | Cambodia



Salin is a mother and a principal of a primary school in rural Cambodia. Like many families in her village, Salin faced constant water shortages which made it difficult to provide safe drinking water for her daughter.

Salin's family struggled to regularly access clean drinking water, with the nearest water well over 1.5 kilometres from their village. Children at her school also regularly missed school because of waterborne diseases.

With the support of Caritas Australia's local partners in Cambodia, Salin and her community constructed a water station near her school to supply clean water to people in her community. Children at her school are healthier and less likely to miss school because they can access clean water, handwash, and toilet facilities. Salin's community voted her to be the chairperson of her village's water station committee and she is now leading her community to ensure clean water for all.

"I am proud that I can help the community have access to water," Salin said.

Salin's school now has access to clean water. Photo: Caritas Australia.

THE BIG WATER WALK

Case Studies | Zimbabwe



Life in her village in north-western Zimbabwe wasn't easy for Thandolwayo. Every morning Thandolwayo would walk 7 kilometres and risk being attacked by crocodiles as she collected contaminated water for her family. She'd then go to school feeling exhausted.

Thandolwayo's hope to be a nurse seemed almost impossible to realise, until Caritas Hwange helped the village to install two solar-powered pumps and two 10,000 litre water storage tanks. The pumps draw the water up from the river to the storage tanks. Thanks to Caritas' support, water is now on tap in the village, benefitting the whole community - and Thandolwayo can concentrate on her education.

"Now I can bathe every day, the distance to collect water for the family has been reduced," Thandolwayo says. ***"We now drink clean, safe water and diseases are no longer affecting us."***

The plentiful water supply also triggered new ventures in her village. The new water source was used to mould bricks for building houses and to pound maize to sell. They were also able to build a community garden and a fish pond to generate a better income for their community.

Thandolwayo collecting water from a new tap. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.