

PROJECTCOMPASSION

UNITE AGAINST POVERTY this Lent











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IMPORTANT - STUDENT WELLBEING

At Caritas Australia, we believe that all people should be treated with respect and dignity. Everyone has the right to feel safe, especially children and vulnerable adults. Please consider your audience when selecting which stories and activities to share with your class.

Our Safeguarding animation recognises that learning about challenges to the health, wellbeing and safety of others and our earth can be hard. It encourages young people to talk to their teacher or trusted adult if they're feeling worried or upset about anything they have learnt through our resources or activities. The animation also acknowledges Caritas Australia's commitment for children and vulnerable adults to feel valued and heard by encouraging them to share their great ideas with us.



Watch Caritas Australia's Safeguarding Animation



We are a valued partner of the Australian Government, receiving flexible funding under the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) each year to implement development and poverty alleviation programs overseas.

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PROJECT COMPASSION AND THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

Let's all *Unite Against Poverty!* There is no time like 2025!

This year is an exciting time in the life of the Catholic Church. A Jubilee year only comes around once every quarter of a century, and it brings with it a special invitation for each one of us. That invitation is close to the heart of Caritas Australia's Project Compassion. The theme of Jubilee 2025 is Pilgrims of Hope. It is hope which calls us to come together and *Unite Against Poverty*.

The word 'Jubilee' comes from the Hebrew word for a ram's horn, which was blown to announce the start of a Jubilee year in the Bible. The idea of a jubilee goes right back to biblical times and is closely linked to our call to a faith that does justice. It stems from the idea of a Sabbath. Once a week, from the beginning of our relationship with God, we stopped work to rest. Every seven years, at least part of the land was allowed to rest and recover, something that modern science happens to appreciate as part of caring for Earth. During a Jubilee year, debts were cancelled, people could rest, and because crops weren't planted, even the land was able to rest. It was seen as a fresh start.

It was also a time of freedom: prisoners and slaves were freed, and land was given to those who didn't have any. It was known as the year of the Lord's favour.

In Chapter 4 of Luke's Gospel, when Jesus returns to his hometown, he announces the 'year of the Lord's favor.' This is the meaning of jubilee: 'he has sent me to bring good news to the poor and freedom for those in captivity'.

During Lent, we are called to be good news for the poor. Project Compassion is a wonderful way to do this. This year, we share 3 challenging yet inspiring stories. We meet Toefuata'iga in Samoa, Lam from rural Vietnam, and Irene from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We encourage students to discover the power of giving and the impact that their contribution, however big or small, can have in the lives of others.

Let us come together once again in this Year of Jubilee as pilgrims of hope and *Unite Against Poverty!*

Introducing Project Compassion

Introduce Caritas Australia's Project Compassion appeal using the following resources:

- Introduction to Project Compassion PPT
- Introduction to Project Compassion Video
- Introduction to Caritas Australia Lower Primary
- Introduction to Caritas Australia Upper Primary



PILGRIMS OF HOPE

Project Compassion 2025 for students is reflective and prayerful in nature. It is designed for students to participate in **three small pilgrimages** throughout Lent without leaving the school grounds. It is important that students understand what a pilgrimage is, in order to embark on one. A pilgrimage is not simply a trip to a sacred site. It is a deliberate journey that allows time and space to engage with one's own thoughts and feelings and it provides us with opportunities to encounter God.

The three pilgrimages are divided into five parts and will be repeated three times throughout the course of Lent. Each time a new pilgrimage begins, students will be given the opportunity to journey to a different country and see how someone in that place lives. They can reflect on their own life knowing how it might be both similar to and different from those they meet. Students are invited to meet Toefuata'iga from Samoa, Lam from Vietnam and Irene from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As with any pilgrimage, preparation is required. In this stage, students understand what a pilgrimage is, how it is undertaken and how they will be encouraged to respond and reflect along the way. Several suggested activities are presented in the following pages. There are class sessions and student sessions. Class sessions are completed by the whole class. Student sessions mean that students may decide if they complete it. It is encouraged that at least two student activities per section are completed in order to experience a well-rounded pilgrimage.

The **five parts of the pilgrimages** that follow are:



The preparation phase for each pilgrimage is the same.

- **1. Set aside time** it might be useful to have a consistent time each day where students are invited to journey through Lent.
- 2. Set an intention This can be a class intention or an individual intention. For example 'Be open to hear God's voice in others' or 'Decide what I can do for others this Lent'.
- **3. Slow down** When we rush through life, we often don't hear what is really going on or being said. If we take time to do tasks slowly and intentionally, we are more likely to learn and grow from the experience.
- **4. Signify the beginning and the end** Each time students start their sessions, signify the beginning and the end with the same prayer, sound, song or ritual. For example, you might recite the Our Father together, sound a chime, sing a song or light a candle. At the end of the session, you might like to repeat the same to signify closure until next time.
- **5. Pray -** Be sure to invite Jesus into the reflection space. It might be as simple as Jesus, be with us today.





Catholic Social Teaching (CST) Guide

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) principles cover all spheres of life – the economic, political, ecological, personal and spiritual. The principles are inspired by scripture and the writings of the Pope and other Catholic leaders about social issues.

Caritas Australia's work is shaped by the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching.

HUMAN DIGNITY

We believe every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and therefore has inherent dignity that should always be safeguarded.



SUBSIDIARITY AND PARTICIPATION

We believe all people have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Subsidiarity requires that decisions are made by people closest and most affected by the issues and concerns of the community.





SOLIDARITY

We believe we are part of one human family and have a responsibility to help each person achieve their full potential.



THE COMMON GOOD

We believe the good of each human person is intimately related to the good of the whole community. We are all responsible for each other.



We believe in prioritising the women, men and children most vulnerable to extreme poverty and injustice.



CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

We believe that care for our common home is vital for the common good of all people. We believe a true ecological approach is a social approach. We are to be protectors of creation and of one another.



For more on Catholic Social Teaching, including classroom activities, short films and other resources, visit our CST Toolkit.

Photo credits: Arlette Bashizi/Caritas Australia (Top right, bottom left, bottom right). Caritas Australia (remaining photos).



Project Compassion Film





PROJECT COMPASSION LENTEN PRAYER

God of our journey
we are all pilgrims of hope
brought together by your love
and your wish that we may all be one.

We pray that in this Year of Jubilee when we are called to greater justice and care for our common home that we may *Unite Against Poverty*.

May we work in unity for the freedom of the oppressed and the renewal of creation.

May our compassionate minds and generous hearts help bring about a world where all can live in peace.

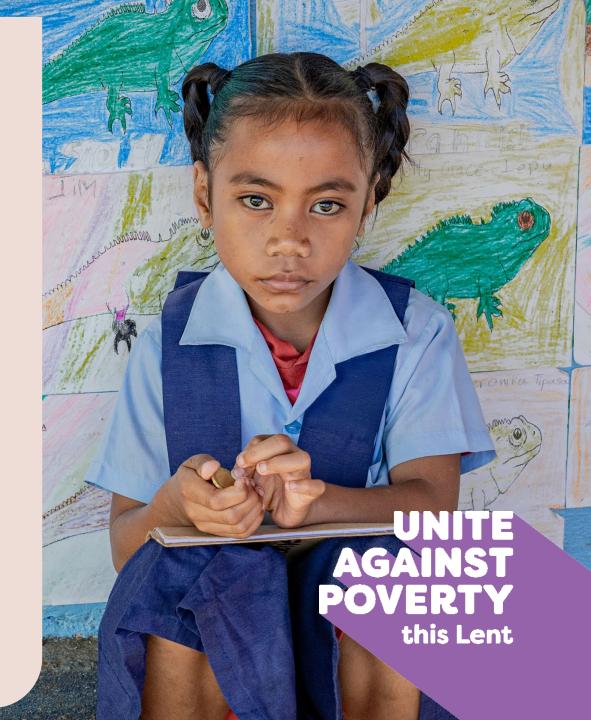
May our Lenten pilgrimage of fasting, almsgiving and prayer bring us closer to your loving heart.

We ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen

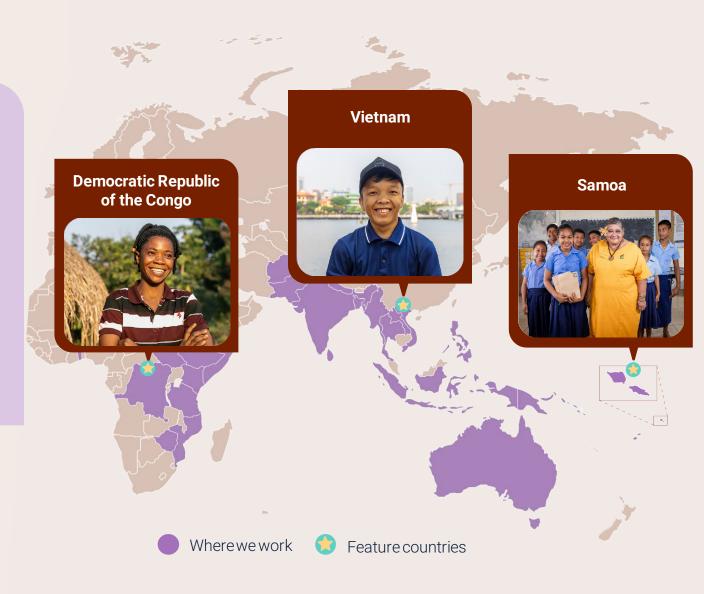


PROJECT COMPASSION



Where we work

For over 60 years, Caritas
Australia has worked
hand in hand with the
most marginalised
and remote communities
in Australia and overseas
to confront the
challenges of poverty.









Toefuata'iga's Story

(Toy-foo-ah-tah-ing-ah)

Samoa

Toefuata'iga (Toy-foo-ah-tah-ing-ah) is 13 years old and lives in Samoa, a beautiful island country. Despite being surrounded by water, sometimes Toefuata'iga's school didn't have enough clean water. This made it hard for her and her friends to stay healthy and learn.

In Samoa, many people rely on rainwater or their neighbour's piped water for their daily water needs. Climate change is making things worse causing longer dry periods and therefore less rainwater. The Samoan Water Authority pipeline frequently shuts down due to natural disasters and the need for maintenance. Intense heavy rains can make piped water dirty and unsafe to drink, resulting in no clean water at Toefuata'iga's school.

At times, when the school ran out of clean water, teachers had to fetch water themselves in buckets from neighbouring homes. This took time away from teaching and planning lessons. On days with little or no water, students were sent home early, missing out on learning and playing with friends.

"I felt sad when there was no school. There's not enough time to read a book or play games with my friends," Toefuata'iga said.

"School would finish early because when there wasn't any water, we wouldn't have classes," Toefuata'iga explained. This meant she and her classmates missed out on important lessons. Principal Ada explained that the school had to close about five to six times each term, especially during the dry months. Without clean water, many students suffered from dehydration and got sick with diseases like typhoid.

"Parents would have to ring us up to tell us that their kids are sick or send letters excusing them for not being at school. It was normally things like headaches caused by heat or dehydration, or stomach aches... Like if it's typhoid or whatever, disease that's caused from lack of water," said Principal Ada. When many students were absent, teachers had to go back and repeat lessons, slowing down the whole class.

Access to clean drinking water is a problem for many children around the world. 288 million children attend schools with no drinking water at all. Despite being surrounded by water, in Oceania, nearly half of all schools don't have access to basic drinking water services.¹

Principal Ada knew the school desperately needed a water tank to store water so students and teachers could access clean drinking water every day. With support from Caritas Australia's local partner, Caritas Samoa, a 10,000 L water tank was installed at Toefuata'iga's school as part of a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) program.

"Since we've had the water tank, there's been a big help for us because when our taps aren't working, there's a water tank we can use," Toefuata'iga explained.

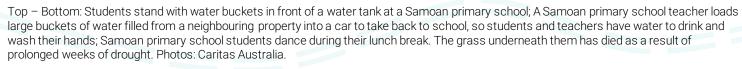
Now, the tank is filled with piped water when it is available and provides enough water for the whole day. This means students can continue their lessons, stay healthy and play with their friends, resulting in a significant improvement in both their learning and wellbeing.

Through the WASH program, schools are also provided soap and plastic tubs to wash their hands to improve students' hygiene.

"Now that we have the water tank, things are so much better," said Toefuata'iga. "We can stay at school all day, and I get to spend more time learning and playing with my friends. I'm happy that we don't have to go home early anymore."

Together we can unite against poverty by supporting Project Compassion. Your donations enable Caritas Australia to continue to assist communities to have access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene. These efforts help students pursue their education and build a brighter future. Having clean water is important for breaking the cycle of poverty and helping students like Toefuata'iga achieve their dreams!

¹ World Health Organisation, State of the World's Drinking Water, 2022













TOEFUATA'IGA'S STORY

S ENCOUNTER

Read Toefuata'iga's Story (pages 10 and 11), or for lower primary students use <u>Toefuata'iga's Photo Storybook</u>.

ACTIVITY 1: CLASS DISCUSSION

- a) Where does Toefuata'iga live?
 - b) What was the big problem at Toefuata'iga's school?
- c) How did Caritas Australia and Caritas Samoa help the school?
- d) How does having clean water help students and teachers?
- e) How does donating to Project Compassion help people have what they need?

ACTIVITY 2: PHOTO STUDY

As a class, view the photos in <u>Toefuata'iga's Photo Storybook</u>. Ask students:

- a) What do the photos show you about Toefuata'iga's school?
- b) Which photo do you like the best? Why?
- c) What questions would you like to ask Toefuata'iga?
- d) What do you want to learn more about?

ACTIVITY 3: WATCH THE 'DAY IN THE LIFE' FILM OF ASO

Aso goes to the same school as Toefuata'iga. Watch this short snapshot of Aso's life and his family.

As a group , complete a Venn Diagram, noting what is unique to the students and to Aso, and what is similar or the same.





TOEFUATA'IGA'S STORY



ACTIVITY 4

Read Matthew 25:34-40.

The Seven Corporal Works of Mercy find their foundation in this Scripture. More information about the Corporal Works of Mercy can be found here. As a group, identify the different Seven Corporal Works of Mercy:

- 1. Feed the hungry
- 2. Give drink to the thirsty
- 3. Clothe the naked
- 4. Welcome the stranger
- 5. Visit the sick
- 6. Visit the imprisoned
- 7. Bury the dead.

Reflection Questions

- Which Corporal Work of Mercy relates to Toefuata'iga's story?
- What did I find hard learning about Toefuata'iga's story or watching in Aso's day in the life film?
- Where do I fit into the story?
- As a pilgrim of hope, where do I see hope in this story?
- What is God asking of me now?

ACTIVITY 5

Catholic Social Teaching - Preferential Option for the Poor



Explanation:

- · A way of responding in love when people don't have what they need.
- The Bible teaches us to take extra special care of the most vulnerable people in society.
- · We should try to create a fairer world.

Students write or draw a response to the question (See worksheet on page 14):

 How is this Catholic Social Teaching demonstrated in Toefuata'iga's story?



ACTIVITY 6

Lent is about preparing for the death and resurrection of Jesus. We do this through prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Discuss as a group how you can support Toefuata'iga and her community this Lent.

- Is there a class action that you could complete?
- What might it be? (Note: Fasting isn't just about abstaining from food. It could be something like gossiping, harsh words, wasting water or rubbish)



ACTIVITY 7

Write a prayer for Toefuata'iga and her school.

See worksheet on page 15.



PROJECT COMPASSION Unite Against Poverty this Lent

Catholic Social Teaching Preferential Option for the Poor

Explanation:

- A way of responding in love when people don't have what they need.
- The Bible teaches us to take extra special care of the most vulnerable people in society.
- · We should try to create a fairer world.



Draw or write your response to this question:

• How is this Catholic Social Teaching demonstrated in Toefuata'iga's story?

PROJECT COMPASSION Unite Against Poverty this Lent

My Prayer for Toefuata'iga



Prior to support from the I-SHINE program, Lam felt increasingly isolated. Here, Lam reflects in his family home in Quang Nam, Vietnam. Photo: Caritas Australia.

Lam's Story

Vietnam

Lam is 27 years old and lives in a small village in rural Vietnam with his parents. His family worked hard as farmers, but for Lam, things weren't always easy. Lam is of short stature and has many challenges because of his disability. He found it hard to move around and became isolated from his community.

Lam often stayed at home, helping his family with daily tasks like feeding chickens, cooking meals, and taking care of the farm. But Lam had always loved drawing and working with computers. He dreamed of becoming a graphic designer. However, without the right opportunities, that dream seemed impossible.

"I'm really self-conscious about my height," Lam shared. "Even doing basic things is hard for me, so I tend to stay at home and keep to myself."

Lam watched his friends pursue their careers at university, studying to become doctors or teachers. He wanted to follow his passion too, but his disability limited the job options in his rural village. He felt isolated, and his dream of becoming a graphic designer felt further away.

One day, everything changed when Lam found out about a program that could help him. Caritas Australia's partner, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), offered Lam the chance to join the I-SHINE program. This program helps young people with disabilities in Vietnam gain access to education and job training.

Lam was thrilled to be selected for the program. He received financial support to take a six-month IT technician training course in Da Nang, a big city about 50 km from his hometown.



Although he had never travelled that far before, Lam was excited to take this new step toward his dream.

During the training, Lam worked hard and made new friends. He was happy to connect with other young people who had similar experiences. He joined a local disability group, where he could share his story and feel part of a community again.

"It's been a game-changer, giving me the chance to connect with friends, gain more professional knowledge, and land a job that aligns with my passions and interests," Lam said.

With the skills he gained from the course, Lam started his own freelance graphic design business from home. His dream came true! He now works with clients both in Vietnam and from other countries. Every month, he earns a stable income and is proud to support himself.

"Right now, I'm most proud of being less dependent on my parents. They can finally relax knowing I've found a fulfilling career that I'm truly passionate about," Lam said.

The I-SHINE program also teaches people living with a disability how to sew items such as bags and cushions as well as how to make paper flowers to sell. Paper flowers are very popular as they last longer than fresh flowers in Vietnam.

There are around six million people¹ who live with a disability in Vietnam. Many live in rural areas like Lam, without access to training or job opportunities. But Lam's story shows what is possible when people living with a disability are given the opportunity to thrive and fulfil their true potential. There are still many other people in Vietnam and around the world who still need the support of people like you so that they are not left behind.

"It's a struggle to feel like we fit into society, and our limited mobility makes it hard to access jobs or education... that's why we desperately need the help of these amazing charitable organisations," Lam said. "I'm really hoping this initiative keeps growing and spreading its impact, uplifting even more people in similar situations, both here at home and around the globe."

¹ General Statistics Office in Vietnam.

Along with your generous support, this program is also supported by the Australian Government, through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

Top – Bottom: Lam harvests vegetables, a household responsibility he managed before receiving support from the I-SHINE program and starting his career as a successful graphic designer; Lam visits the training centre in Da Nang city, where, with support from the I-SHINE program and CRS team, he completed a six-month IT technician course that helped launch his career as a freelance graphic designer; Lam and other I-SHINE program youth with a disability, supported by Catholic Relief Services staff, create and sell handmade flowers in Vietnam. Photo: Caritas Australia.











LAM'S STORY

S ENCOUNTER

Read Lam's Story (pages 17 and 18), or for lower primary students use Lam's Photo Storybook.

ACTIVITY 1: CLASS DISCUSSION

- a) What kind of work does Lam's family do in their village?
- b) Why did Lam feel lonely?
- c) What program did Lam join to help him learn new skills?
- d) What organisation supported Lam to complete computer training?
- e) How did Lam's life change after the program?

ACTIVITY 2: PHOTO STUDY

As a class, view the photos in Lam's Photo Storybook.

Ask students:

- a) What do the photos show you about Lam's life?
- b) Which photo do you like the best? Why?
- c) What questions would you like to ask Lam?
- d) What do you want to learn more about?

ACTIVITY 3: WATCH THE DAY IN THE LIFE VIDEO

As a group, complete a Venn Diagram, noting what is unique to the students and to Lam, and what is similar or the same.





LAM'S STORY



ACTIVITY 4

Read <u>Matthew 25:34-40</u>. Discuss how the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy are relevant in the world today.

- 1. Feed the hungry
- 2. Give drink to the thirsty
- 3. Clothe the naked
- 4. Welcome the stranger
- 5. Visit the sick
- 6. Visit the imprisoned
- 7. Bury the dead.

Reflection Questions

- Which Corporal Work of Mercy relates to Lam's story.
- What did I find hard learning about Lam's story?
- Where do I fit into the story?
- As a pilgrim of hope, where do I see hope in this story?
- What is God asking of me now?

ACTIVITY 5

Catholic Social Teaching - Human Dignity



Explanation:

- Every person is made in the image of God.
- We are all valuable and worthy of respect and fairness because we are all human.

Students write or draw a response to the question:

• How is a respect for human dignity demonstrated in Lam's story? See worksheet on page 21.



ACTIVITY 6

Lent is about preparing for the death and resurrection of Jesus. We do this through prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

After learning about Lam's story in Vietnam discuss as a group how you can support people like Lam this Lent.

• Is there a class action that you could complete?



ACTIVITY 7

Write a prayer for Lam and the participants of the I-SHINE program.

See worksheet on page 22.





PROJECT COMPASSION Unite Against Poverty this Lent

Catholic Social Teaching Human Dignity

Explanation:

- Every person is made in the image of God.
- We are all valuable and worthy of respect and fairness because we are all human.

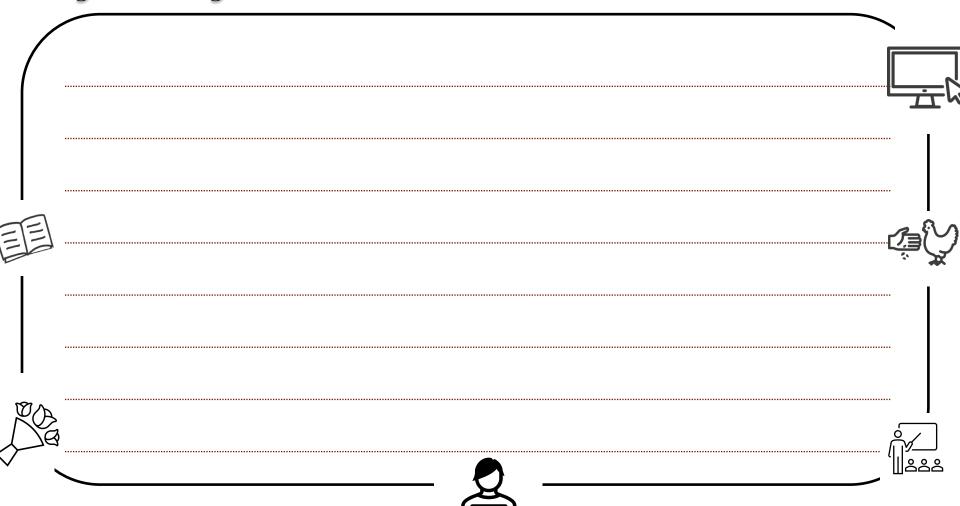


Draw or write your response to this question:

• How is human dignity demonstrated in Lam's story?

PROJECT COMPASSION Unite Against Poverty this Lent

My Prayer for Lam







Irene's Story

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Irene is a young single mother who lives in a rural area called Kongolo, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). She looks after her two children, one is 3 years old, and the other is 7. Irene also helps take care of her brothers' family and her mother.

The DRC is one of the poorest countries in the world. Due to ongoing conflict and wars, millions of people have died and many more have had to leave their homes. Nearly 70% of people now live below the poverty line on less than \$3.30 AUD a day.¹

Irene has had a tough life. Her father died in a war and Irene along with her mother and siblings were forced to leave their home. Irene's life became even harder when her husband left her to raise their two children on her own. Irene didn't finish her education, and there weren't many job options in her village, so it was difficult for Irene to make enough money to survive.

Irene decided to return to her mother's house for support. Her mother had always been there for her, but she was experiencing poverty too. Sometimes Irene's mother had to sell some of their belongings like cooking pots to afford the basic needs of the family. They slept on the ground as it was too expensive to buy mats for sleeping.

"She welcomed me, continuing to look after me and my two children. She cultivated cassava for our food, sometimes fishing to diversify our meals. We survived thanks to my mother's sacrifices," Irene explained.

¹UNDP



Things started to get better when Irene joined the Youth Capacity Strengthening Program (YCSP), run by Caritas Australia's partner, Caritas Kongolo. The program helps young people learn skills to earn money to support themselves and to participate in their community. Irene took a sewing class through the program. She learnt how to make clothes to sell and the program gave her a sewing machine and fabric to use.

After completing the 6-month sewing course, Irene got to keep her sewing machine and started earning money from selling the clothes she made. She was then able to buy other items her family needed and send her son, nieces and nephews to school. Irene proudly said, "I make sure to provide for all their needs. These are the changes in my life thanks to this job... There are 15 of us at home, and I take care of everyone," Irene explained.

On top of this, Irene also learnt farming skills through the YCSP. Now she can grow food for her family to eat. She said: "We have a group field, but I also have my own field that produces the food we eat today at home."

"Before, we didn't have plates to serve food or anything presentable for guests, but today, thanks to sewing, I earn money and bought thermoses, glasses, and more. I now cover all the household needs."

The YCSP has made a huge difference in Irene's life and Irene is generously sharing her new skills by teaching other women how to sew. She said, "Our lives are so different now. Before, women depended on men's income, but now, with our sewing skills, we can take care of ourselves... When I teach others to sew, I feel comfortable and useful to my community."

Life has been tough for Irene, but she has worked hard, learnt new skills, and is really good at sewing. She has been able to break out of a cycle of poverty. Irene can now send her son to school and support her extended family. Through programs like these, your support helps to offer pathways out of poverty in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and beyond.







Top – Bottom: Irene teaches other women how to sew after participating in the Caritas-supported youth empowerment program in Kongolo, Democratic Republic of the Congo; Irene harvests vegetables in her field in Kongolo, Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition to training in sewing, Irene has also benefited from Caritas-supported training in agriculture, enabling her to improve the quality and quantity of her harvests; Irene accompanies her eldest son, niece and nephew to school. Photo: Arlette Bashizi/Caritas Australia.





IRENE'S STORY

🖇 ENCOUNTER

Read Irene's story (pages 24 and 25), or for lower primary students use <u>Irene's Photo Storybook</u>.

ACTIVITY 1: CLASS DISCUSSION

- a) What made life hard for Irene and her family?
- b) What new skills did Irene learn?
- c) How did Caritas help?
- d) How is Irene helping others?
- e) How will you share Irene's story with others?

ACTIVITY 2: PHOTO STUDY

As a class, view the photos in <u>Irene's Photo Storybook</u>.

Ask students:

- a) What do the photos show you about Irene's life?
- b) Which photo do you like the best? Why?
- c) What questions would you like to ask Irene?
- d) What do you want to learn more about?

ACTIVITY 3: WATCH THE DAY IN THE LIFE VIDEO

As a group, complete a Venn Diagram, noting what is unique to the students and to Irene and what is similar or the same.





IRENE'S STORY



ACTIVITY 4

Read <u>Matthew 25:34-40</u>. Discuss how you could carry out each of the Corporal Works of Mercy as a class. This may require some out of the box thinking!

- 1. Feed the hungry
- 2. Give drink to the thirsty
- 3. Clothe the naked
- 4. Welcome the stranger
- 5. Visit the sick
- 6. Visit the imprisoned
- 7. Bury the dead.

Reflection Questions

- Which Corporal Work of Mercy relates to Irene's story.
- What did I find hard learning about Irene's story?
- Where do I fit into the story?
- As a pilgrim of hope, where do I see hope in this story?
- What is God asking of me now?

ACTIVITY 5

Catholic Social Teaching - Solidarity





- We are all connected.
- We need to work together and support each other as one human family.

Students write or draw a response to the question:

• How can we stand in solidarity with Irene? See worksheet on page 28.



ACTIVITY 6

Lent is about preparing for the death and resurrection of Jesus. We do this through prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

After learning about Irene's story in the DRC discuss as a class how students could participate in these Lenten actions.

• Is there a class action that you could complete? You might like to focus on a different action to the first two pilgrimages.



ACTIVITY 7

Write a prayer for Irene.

See worksheet on page 29.





Catholic Social Teaching Solidarity

Explanation:

- We are all connected.
- We need to work together and support each other as one human family.



Draw or write your response to this question:

• How can we stand in solidarity with Irene?

PROJECT COMPASSION Unite Against Poverty this Lent

My Prayer for Irene

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Unite Against Poverty this Lent

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