

UNITINGWORLD

UPDATE
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Act2: Our take on
the future direction
of the UCA

Planting a
new future

for the children
of Timor-Leste
and Maluku



UnitingWorld
connecting communities for life

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

Because every person matters.

Planting a new future for the children of Timor-Leste and Maluku



There's a food crisis in two of the poorest places in our region.

Our partners have a plan to beat it.

Malnutrition, particularly among children, has been a huge problem in Timor-Leste and Maluku (East Indonesia) and now there is a hidden hunger crisis being made worse by the rising cost of living, global conflict and climate change.

In Timor-Leste, the prevalence of stunting, impaired growth and development caused by malnutrition, in children under five is 47 percent, among the highest in the world. In Maluku, 34 percent of children under five are stunted.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has made things more difficult; reducing wheat production, wrecking supply chains and inflating the price of food imports. Experts say the global food

situation is set to worsen with the ongoing conflict and will continue to hit the poor the hardest.

We asked our partners how we could best help, and they told us they had a sustainable, local solution to the crisis. Gardening!

Hundreds of families growing their own food right where they live.

New Director of our partner FUSONA*, Julio Da Costa is passionate about equipping families to tackle the food crisis themselves.

"We want every family and community to have the opportunity to produce their own food to eat and improve their health. And if they want to earn an income they can plant extra to sell," said Julio.

"People will apply their own time and energy to generate their food and income. We will provide seeds, equipment and education, and accompany families at every step of the way."

Julio also says part of the project will be to educate people about the importance of good nutrition and sanitation.

"So far, we've been successfully showing people how to grow sweet potato, eggplant, spinach and green mustard... people have been coming to the church to learn more and join in," he says.

"I believe we can impact thousands of lives with this approach and reduce malnutrition for children in Timor-Leste."

We've launched an appeal to support our partners in Timor-Leste and Maluku to tackle the food crisis and help ensure as many children as possible do not go hungry. You can find out more about their projects and donate at www.unitingworld.org.au/foodcrisis

*FUSONA is the development agency of our partner church, the Protestant Church of Timor-Leste (IPTL)

The future of the Uniting Church: our take



ACT2 is a major transformational change project focused on deciding on the future of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA). As part of the Act2 Project, every Uniting Church member, council and community is being invited to take part.

As people who support international mission and value our identity as part of the global church, we'd love you to participate.

We've contributed our perspective through a submission and in an online forum that we also invited international partners to join. Rev Dr Cliff Bird from the United Church in the Solomon Islands (UCSI) was a panellist in the forum and shared some generous feedback about what partnership with the UCA has meant to UCSI.

"Our understanding of mission has evolved since we entered into partnership with the Uniting Church in Australia. It has been broadened and enriched as it has moved from a narrowly spiritualistic understanding to a more holistic understanding," he said.



Glebe Road Uniting Church service in QLD.

"We now share a greater focus on practical concerns like ending poverty and violence against women and taking faithful action on climate change. These were not seen as core business of the church, but now they are part of our life and understanding of what it means to follow Jesus."

Rev Dr Bird also pointed to how the partnership has strengthened UCSI as an institution.

"Our decision-making processes have improved along with our ability to look inwardly. It has resulted in us becoming more accountable and transparent and create more rigorous policies and procedures."

"We're so grateful to be able to share knowledge and expertise, stories and resources back and forth with our partners in Australia as elsewhere."

In our written submission to Act2, we highlighted some strengths of the UCA and major challenges as we see it. We also provided some ideas for change and how we and our international partners could help:

"As Christianity becomes a minority faith in an increasingly diverse and secular Australia, we have much to learn from our partner churches who come from multifaith contexts, and who fight poverty and injustice with dogged determination without diluting their identity as Christians or being reticent about sharing God's desire to know and love all people."

You can read our full submission at www.unitingworld.org.au/news/act2

Find out more about the Act2 Project and how you can engage at www.act2uca.com



In the final months of the financial year, you helped us reach our target of \$500,000 to support the life-changing work of our partners.

The funds we raised together help us to co-invest with the Australian Government and make a bigger impact through our poverty alleviation and climate change projects.

Thank you to everyone who helped us get there! It will go a long way to help end poverty and injustice in our world through the love and dedication of our partners in in the Pacific, Asia and Africa.

Komang and his family now have a whole new future, free from poverty, because of the network formed by you and others working together to make powerful change.

We are now in the middle of collecting reports, information and stories on what was achieved in the last financial year, and we look forward to sharing our Annual Report with you later this year.

Year 19 of the church partnership program in Papua New Guinea

Since 2004, the governments of Australia and Papua New Guinea (PNG) have worked in partnership with PNG's seven mainline churches and their respective Australian partners to promote 'holistic, inclusive, and sustainable development' under the Church Partnership Program (CPP).

UnitingWorld and our partner, the United Church in Papua New Guinea (UCPNG), have been part of the CPP since its beginning. It is now one of the longest ongoing projects of Australia's aid program.

The CPP supports churches to improve their capacity to deliver crucial health and education services, especially in rural and remote areas, as well as a broad range of activities in support of gender equality and social inclusion, peace and prosperity, and disaster risk reduction.

In 2004 it was acknowledged that half the health and education services in PNG were run by churches and church-based agencies. Today it's closer to 70 percent!

As a result, the CPP's new phase aims to shift the emphasis from a service delivery model to a social accountability model, recognising that the PNG

government needs to be held responsible and that it needs to have the capacity to deliver vital services to its people.

"The new focus of the CPP is about empowering civil society to hold their government to account to provide the country's health and education services," said UnitingWorld Head of Programs Peter Keegan.

"To do that requires the kind of broad-based collaboration that already exists between churches via the CPP."

Peter joined other CPP member churches in Port Moresby recently for a two-day forum to "Rethink development in PNG through theological principles and effective governance".

PROJECT UPDATE



Speaking at the forum, the Australian High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea Jon Philp reflected: "Church networks and activities are often seen as a lifeline for the country's most remote and disadvantaged communities, and they are equally important to PNG's growing urban population. The success of the Church Partnership Program relies on the reach and impact of this network, along with the collective commitment of the churches, government, the private sector, civil society, and other partners."

United Church in PNG leading the way on gender equality and social inclusion

One of the remarkable successes of the CPP is that through the partnership, despite each of the seven church denominations in PNG having very different theological and organisational cultures and traditions, they are working together to change lives.

UCPNG is the lead agency on Gender Equality Theology and social inclusion within the CPP and is determined to keep this central to their church's mission.

As PNG remains one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a woman or girl, the task of shifting cultures of men's violence is a huge, long-term challenge.

The CPP has a critical role to play. Representing 71 percent of the country's Christian population,

CPP member churches wield enormous social influence.

The current phase of the project aims to better leverage the influence of church leaders and increase the community outreach of churches to shift negative gender and social attitudes that are commonly held in PNG towards women, people with disabilities and other socially excluded groups.

Working with media partners, churches will be helped to develop media engagement strategies that enable them to engage multiple forms of media (print, radio, digital) more effectively to maximize the reach and influence of messages of gender equality and anti-violence.

The CPP will also be tracking changes to community attitudes to be able to demonstrate the impact. We're excited to see the results!

Please pray for the vital mission of the Church Partnership Program as it enters its 20th year of faithful collaboration to improve lives and communities.

For more details on the new phase of the CPP in Papua New Guinea, visit www.unitingworld.org.au/projects/church-partnership-program



UCPNG staff at a recent workshop and *talanoa* on the impacts of gender-based violence in PNG.



The Church Partnership Program is supported by the Australian Government through the Papua New Guinea–Australia Partnership.



Peace Doves from Breakfast Point to the world

The Breakfast Point Men's Shed in NSW has generously crafted 50 wooden doves for use as special gifts for international partners.

The wooden dove shape is taken from Uniting Church in Australia logo, representing both peace and the holy spirit descending.

UnitingWorld Ambassador Howard Clark presented Kevin, Brian, Pravin and Peter at the Men's Shed with a certificate of thanks for the doves – a unique way to support our mission to connect with the global church.

"The handcrafted doves are a powerful reminder to our partners of the prayers and solidarity of so many people in Australia," Howard told them.

Thank you, Breakfast Point Men's Shed and the many people and groups finding creative ways to support our mission!



HELP US SHARE Everything in Common!



Everything in Common is our ethical gift catalogue, filled with gifts that fight poverty through health, education, leadership and income opportunities.

When people give Everything in Common gifts, it directly supports our projects helping people lead lives of dignity and hope.

You can help us make a big difference by becoming an Everything in Common Advocate and hosting a gift stall in your church, school or community group in the lead up to Christmas this year.

We'll send you everything you need to help your community make a big difference.



Interested? Register Now!

www.unitingworld.org.au/everythingincommon

Or for more information, reach out on 1800 998 122 or email Mardi at mardil@unitingworld.org.au

NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR

THE ROAD AHEAD

The story you've just read of a food crisis affecting some of our nearest neighbours is a warning.

It's not just food security in Maluku and Timor-Leste that keeps me up at night. Climate change is no longer an anticipated calamity, it is a lived reality right across the world, from wildfires in Canada to floods in New South Wales.

My team, our board and our church partners see climate change as the biggest challenge in the coming years. On the heels of COVID-19 and an uptick in global conflict and sabre-rattling, the hope of 'life in abundance' for the poor and marginalised feels more threatened than ever.

Climate change intensifies poverty, food insecurity, conflict, migration, and inequality - disproportionately affecting women, children, and those with disabilities.

It is no longer possible to deal with the cyclones, floods, fires and droughts as if they were one-off events. Extreme events are the backdrop against

which all of us must live. And it is no surprise that if you're poor, or you are already side-lined because of your gender, your disability, or your identity, you will suffer the most.

So how can we respond faithfully in ways that make a real difference?

We've already begun. Last year, our partners refreshed their project designs to embed climate action and disaster resilience in each. Where they can, they are planting trees and running recycling hubs; they are stabilising landslide-prone areas; they are teaching families about composting and how to make their own natural fertilisers to improve crop yields; they are mapping evacuation centres and planning emergency responses.

Just like in Maluku and Timor-Leste, it's about equipping people to be more self-reliant and able to find local solutions to global challenges. It's supporting people to plan and prepare for the impact of disasters. It's our partners drawing on their faith to inspire communities to care for creation and advocate to their leaders.

At our end, it means ongoing vigilance on our own carbon footprint, keeping relationships strong with fewer air-miles.

And it's why I bring the voice of our partners to you and ask for your solidarity and action. Yes, the challenges are big, but we are children of God, the one who promises abundant life and the reconciliation of the world.

I know you share the faith and hope of our partners. Will you stand with them? Will you do your part - cut back your consumption, share your resources and raise your voice for better policy?

I pray that you do, and you will.

Sureka Goringe

Dr Sureka Goringe,
National Director, UnitingWorld

P.S. A HUGE thank you to everyone who donated during the final months of the financial year. It was a tough year for fundraising so I'm especially grateful for your generosity.

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UnitingWorld is an agency of the Uniting Church in Australia.

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