

## Summer Update 2021

**CAFOD simply could not do its work without your support. We are pleased to share with you how you have helped to bring about the change that communities in crisis need.**

### Beirut Port Explosion

On 4<sup>th</sup> August 2020 the Beirut port experienced two devastating explosions, killing over 200 people and injuring over 6,000. Over 40,000 buildings were damaged or destroyed.

The cause of the blast has been attributed to 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate inadequately stored in port warehouses. Businesses were forced to close and up to 300,000 people may have lost their homes. An estimated 70,000 people lost their jobs, including many migrant workers. The explosion also damaged the waste management infrastructure, resulting in higher health and environmental risks, all aggravated by the Coronavirus pandemic.

The explosions occurred just as Lebanon has been facing many other crises. It is currently in the midst of a major economic collapse and has been without an effective government since August last year. Families are grappling with hyperinflation and shortages of basic items, including medicines and medical supplies, creating a critical situation with more families sliding into extreme poverty and hunger.

According to the World Bank, the economic and financial crisis is ranked as possibly one of the top three most severe crises globally, with an estimated 50 per cent of the population now living below the poverty line.

Additionally, Lebanon is also the country with the most refugees per capita in the world. Although the whole country is about half the size of Wales, it hosts well over a million Syrian refugees on top of more than 400,000 Palestinian refugees. With much attention focused on the pandemic and the explosion, a lot of funding has been diverted from these communities, who are also in desperate need.

### How has CAFOD responded?

CAFOD launched an appeal within 24 hours of the Beirut explosions, and thanks to our existing network of local experts within our partner organisations in Beirut, we were able to quickly respond where needed. Our generous supporters answered our call and we were delighted to raise over £460,000 for our appeal.

In the immediate aftermath of the explosion, CAFOD:

- Supported Caritas Lebanon's rapid response which involved distribution of hot meals, food kits and medicines, first aid and psychological support, hygiene kits, PPE and cleaning materials, and the cleaning and/or

rehabilitation of damaged houses. This one-month rapid response reached 21,110 individuals.

- Supported the mobilisation of youth volunteers who removed rubble from the streets and helped families to clean and make their homes safe
- Supported our partner Association Najdeh’s emergency response through a cash assistance programme which ran in 2 phases between August 2020 and March 2021

The cash assistance programme has so far been able to reach 3,000 vulnerable families including many from marginalised refugee and migrant communities, who lived in the areas most severely affected by the blast. Our partner targeted female-headed families and families which included someone living with a disability. These families were able to use the cash to meet their basic needs such as buying food or paying for medical expenses, materials and labour to repair their damaged housing.

Another of our partners, Basmeh & Zeitouneh, also delivered a programme of ‘cash for work’ activities to support the explosion-affected areas and enable families to generate some income. This included street clearing, clearing drainage channels, electrical maintenance, clearing building entrances to improve inhabitants’ safety, and registering elderly and non-Arabic speaking individuals on the Ministry of Health COVID-19 vaccine platform. The first phase directly reached over 130 people and a further 550 families indirectly, and an additional 2,337 older and non-Arabic speaking individuals through COVID-19 vaccination registration.

One of the people supported through these activities was Malake, who was given the opportunity to become a temporary employee within this cash-for-work project. *“I used to be a taxi driver until my car was completely damaged and I couldn’t afford to fix it or to find another job so I suffered from depression. Now I feel that I am making a difference in the community and I’m more productive!”*



Malake, 55, from Bourj Hammoud

Within one year of the explosion, Caritas Lebanon provided assistance to 356,369 individuals in Beirut and its suburbs in the following ways:

• 3,708 hygiene kits distributed to households
• 7,712 food kits distributed to Households
• 242,145 hot meals have been distributed to those in need
• 1,541 individuals were provided with psychological first aid
• 509 injured provided with Medical First Aid
• 71,999 medicines distributed to patients
• 7,322 medical consultations
• 1,723 houses assessed for damage

House of Peace, a grassroots peacebuilding organisation responded to staff and volunteers experiencing burnout from the Coronavirus pandemic alongside trauma from the explosion. Many also expressed feeling overwhelmed from witnessing stress, poverty, fear, and hopelessness from people they came into contact with. House of Peace developed a “self-care hub” linking front-line responders to psychosocial support.

To date, House of Peace has supported 165 participants from a range of organisations, through innovative holistic approaches which include creative, artistic sessions alongside flash trauma and psychological first aid support. Participants completing the programme expressed a renewed sense of hope and a determination to prioritise self-care whilst working on humanitarian crises.

## CAFOD's Coronavirus Appeal

**In many places where CAFOD works, livelihoods were already fragile. With the Coronavirus pandemic in addition, it has been a year of suffering for many.** As soon as COVID became a reality CAFOD set up a fund in response to the emerging pandemic. In May 2020, we asked for your help, and you responded. CAFOD's incredible community of supporters helped us raise over £5 million and these donations, together with funding from the Disasters Emergency Committee, have been supporting a wide range of activities to limit the impact of COVID, protect the most vulnerable and help communities recover.

We knew that our fundraising for planned work would be hugely impacted by limits on our ability to connect with supporters through parishes and schools. We also realised that our local experts would be unable to deliver some of their work in the way they had hoped, and that funding would be needed to reach their communities affected by Coronavirus. As a result, in some cases, funds for ongoing projects were channelled into COVID response work to address urgent needs. These donations are helping communities survive the impacts of the pandemic and rebuild lives wherever possible. Since April 2020, we have provided support to almost than **30 countries across Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America.**



Emergency support to homeless people in São Paulo during the pandemic

**15,179,666** people have been reached with information on COVID-19, including targeted messages on prevention and how to access support services

**37,669** healthcare workers have been provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

### How we have put your support into action

Our support has varied from country to country and community to community. Over the past 17 months, in order to prevent the spread of the virus and the rapid increase of new cases, we supported health promotion and awareness campaigns, provision of PPE and other basic medical equipment, support for mobile health units, distribution of food, hygiene kits, water buckets and soap, as well as providing safe access to clean water and sanitation facilities and provision of psychological support in both rural and urban areas.

**16,017** households affected by COVID-19 have received emergency food and non-food items

### COVID-19: A year on in Brazil

As of 20 July 2021, there were 542,214 recorded deaths from COVID in Brazil, and almost 20 million cases. The number of Brazilians living in poverty increased from 9 million to 27 million in six months alone, and food prices increased by 18%. Meanwhile, fewer than 30% of the population have received the vaccine.

In September 2020 CAFOD launched a COVID 19 emergency programme in São Paulo. In six months, the programme reached 6,346 of the most vulnerable families (over 16,384 people) living in favelas, abandoned buildings and land, or on the streets in São Paulo. The support they received ranged from food parcels to hygiene kits or shelter.

At least 3,000 homeless people received tents, sleeping bags, hygiene kits and hot meals while 450 families benefited from support to enable them to generate increased income from recycling, enabling them to earn at least R\$150 (£20) additional income each month from the project.

### The impact of COVID 19 on women and girls

In the midst of the pandemic, discrimination faced by women has deepened, and so has their vulnerability across the globe. Not only do women represent 70% of the global social and health care workforce, exposing them to a greater risk of infection, but they have also shouldered most of the burden at home and are disproportionately suffering from the economic impacts of the pandemic. Domestic violence has risen with many countries adopting a 'stay at home' order to stop the spread of the virus.

COVID-19 is having a profound impact on Latin American women. Gender-based violence increased drastically after governments imposed lockdowns. According to the Organization of American States, for many women living through the coronavirus pandemic in Latin America, the greater health risk was probably staying at home. Across our response programmes, CAFOD, together with our local experts, are ensuring that support to women and girls is prioritised within our approach to addressing the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath.

## Universal vaccination rollout and access to the vaccine for poor communities

Fair access to vaccines and a universal vaccination programme is also an area of concern and debate. CAFOD is working alongside other humanitarian and faith-based organisations as a member of the People's Vaccine, a movement which works to ensure that vaccines are available to all people globally.

When a vaccine roll-out is possible, the local organisations we support and Church leaders will play a leading role in advocating for fair access, and play a critical role in addressing stigma and fear of the safety of the vaccines amongst communities. CAFOD, through its different networks, continues to engage in campaigns and actions to call for international vaccines equity, calling EU and UK leaders to end a monopolistic control of the vaccine, in order to support manufacturing capacity in other countries and to support vaccine delivery in-country.

## Yemen

The ongoing brutal conflict has left millions of Yemenis homeless and suffering from extreme levels of malnutrition. Now, the UN has described the spread of coronavirus in Yemen as "extremely alarming" with a healthcare system "in effect collapsed". Five million people are at immediate risk of starvation, 16 million do not have clean safe water and sanitation and 22 million need urgent humanitarian assistance or protection. Very little data is available on the spread of COVID-19, however staff from our partner in Yemen say that they expect the virus to be widespread.

### How has CAFOD responded?

Our local experts are working with conflict-affected communities in the south of Yemen. Delivering aid in Yemen is very challenging, imports into the country are regularly blockaded and warring factions within the country prevent access to communities in need. In spite of these conditions CAFOD and our partner have been able to reach hundreds of families.

Your support has allowed us to deliver life-saving support to families suffering from acute malnutrition.



Maja

Maja (pseudonym) lives with her two children and her elderly father in a remote village in Yemen. As a single mother, she is the head of the household and supports her family. The levels of malnutrition in children are high in her village. It is difficult to buy food and in July 2020, the village was devastated by floods which destroyed the small harvest too. At the end of last year, her situation was desperate, and she did not know how to feed her children or her father.

*"I sold all I had after my divorce in order to support my family", she paused. "I do not have land to cultivate or assets to make an*

*income. My neighbours could no longer support me since they are also struggling to earn a living after COVID-19”.*

CAFOD’s local partner has been supporting rural communities in Yemen with emergency cash assistance for food, reaching 220 households. Maja was one of the families who received the small grant of around \$70, which meant she could afford to buy her basic provisions from the market.

*“My family is happy, and we have enough food to eat now. I have no words to thank this programme for treating my daughter who was in the nutrition program because I could not feed her. More importantly, I am grateful that I was supported with cash to buy food for my family afterwards”*

## Ethiopia

On 4 November 2020, conflict broke out between the regional government and the federal government in northern Ethiopia in the country’s Tigray region.

Communities in Tigray, as well as the neighbouring Amhara and Afar regions have been severely impacted. Hunger is a huge concern, with harvests impacted in November and December. The UN estimates that 7 million people need food aid across Ethiopia. As people flee their homes there are serious concerns for the spread of coronavirus.

### How has CAFOD responded?

CAFOD has a local presence in Ethiopia and is working with church and aid agencies to respond to the crisis. We are supporting the work of the Ethiopian Catholic Church and Caritas Internationalis to impartially address needs of communities on all sides of the conflict. Along with our local experts, we are:

- Supporting health clinics and pharmacies to provide vital care and restock medicines and supplies
- Working with local experts and community support networks to provide psychosocial support to people and communities affected by the conflict
- Delivering temporary shelter materials, blankets, sleeping mats, cooking items and hygiene kits for families displaced and made homeless by the conflict.
- Providing emergency food aid to hundreds of thousands of people in need.

Working alongside the church in Ethiopia, Caritas Internationalis plans to deliver:

- Water to 30,000 people
- Nutrition support to over 50,000 children under five
- Trauma and emergency kits along with hygiene facilities to help stop the spread of Covid-19.

This will be alongside longer-term support, such as the provision of seeds, access to safe drinking water, cash transfers and education materials.



Brkti Haftu

When fighting broke out, Brkti Haftu, 27, walked all day and night with her two children, aged six and eighteen months, hitching a lift for the last part of the journey.

When they arrived in Mekelle, Brkti felt numb and confused that her life has changed so dramatically. Before she fled, she ran a successful coffee shop business with her husband, who is missing. "I do not know if my parents are alive or dead. I

haven't spoken to them in six months." She worries about the future:

*"The situation is not changing, and with Covid, the rainy season, and ongoing war our prospects are getting worse. I fear that people may start to die here in the camp from illness and malnutrition. I hope to be able to go home. To be in control of my life again. Tomorrow may be a better day for Tigray.*

**CAFOD has recently launched an Emergency Food Crisis appeal for families facing extreme food shortages in Tigray, amongst other locations. Please see more [here](#):**

## Thank you

Thank you for the part you have played in helping us respond quickly to reach communities most affected by these crises. Your support enables us to keep communities safe from the health impact of Coronavirus and associated lack of food, whilst we support our local partners to build resilience by developing new and sustainable ways for people to generate an income.

With the impact of lockdown pushing an estimated 150 million people globally into extreme poverty and leaving an additional 130 million people hungry, the work of our local experts to empower communities to have enough food to eat simply couldn't have happened without your generous support.