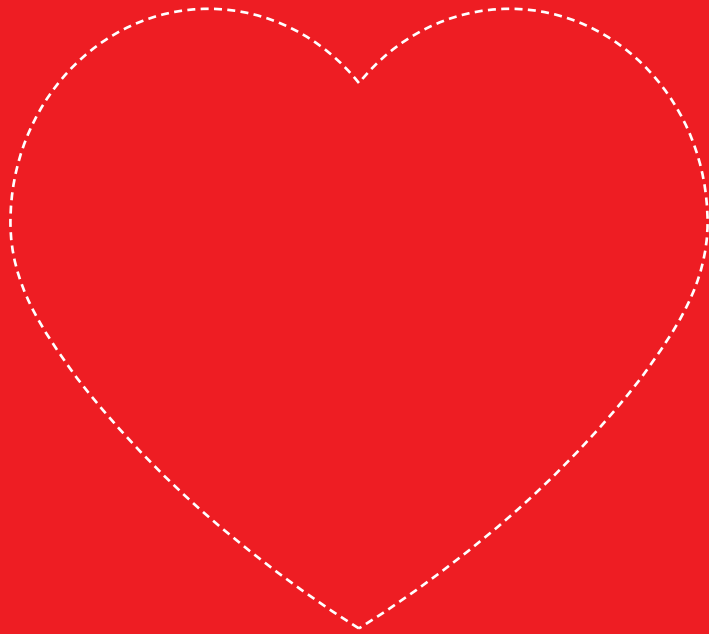


Love across borders



A day in the life of Caritas

Caritas Internationalis marked its 60th anniversary in 2011. With offices in over 160 countries providing humanitarian relief, integral human development and peacebuilding, Caritas is at the heart of the Church's mission, a sign of God's love for humanity in Jesus Christ.

Over the past six decades the world has seen incredible changes. Communism has fallen and computers have transformed the way we work and live. Desperate poverty has, in many countries, been turned into affluence. Hunger and poverty are much diminished.

Yet this affluence has not been distributed equally. Children are still dying of hunger in a world where there is enough food. There are 1,210 billionaires today. But, the world's bottom billion people live without access to adequate healthcare and education.

Many countries still struggle with poverty and injustice. But Caritas is a steady force, investing its time and resources in creating "one human family, zero poverty".

The first national Caritas organisation was launched in Germany in 1897, quickly followed by ones in Switzerland and Austria. The First World War showed that Catholic agencies needed to cooperate more at an international level and the further impact of World War II sowed the seeds that would become Caritas Internationalis. Cities had been destroyed, countries torn apart and refugees were wandering the world looking for a home. The Church's answer to this was Caritas Internationalis: Love across borders.

The Caritas confederation brought national Caritas organisations together so they could share knowledge and experience and support each other in times of disasters and in the response to poverty.

Msgr Georg Hüssler, twice president of Caritas Internationalis in the 1970s and 80s, said, "The idea was to structure the Church's social activities in every country to then create a national Caritas and to have it join Caritas Internationalis. This way, Caritas Internationalis became a highly federal organisation covering the whole world."

At its birth in 1951, the confederation had just 13 member organisations. They were inspired by the then substitute Secretary of State for the Holy See, Msgr Giovanni Battista Montini, who would become Pope Paul VI in 1963.

In his 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (29), Pope Paul VI said, "We must make haste. Too many people are suffering. While some make progress, others stand still or move backwards and the gap between them is widening."

Over 40 years later this is as true as ever. It means that Caritas cannot rest. The confederation must work harder and with more perseverance. Yet more challenges, such as climate change, are appearing on the horizon to reverse the gains we have made.

The heart of our love across borders is within the people all over the world who are trying to help their sisters and brothers. Caritas workers often belong to the communities in which they work. They understand their language, culture and needs. They help people regardless of faith, race or political allegiance.

In the encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (28), Pope Benedict XVI said, "The Church is one of those living forces: she is alive with the love enkindled by the Spirit of Christ. This love does not simply offer people material help, but

refreshment and care for their souls, something which often is even more necessary than material support."

This living force of love nourishes Caritas workers throughout the world. Every day they pass it on to the people they help. But love isn't just given; it is also received. It is received many times over, in many forms, from the millions of people helped by Caritas, in the smallest gestures of generosity.

Caritas workers are strengthened and inspired by the confederation's deep roots. Caritas lives with the gospels as its guiding light: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome, lacking clothes and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me". Matthew 25:35–37.

When hundreds of thousands of people were dying in Ethiopia's famine in 1984, Sr Maura O'Donohue was there supporting a Caritas member organisation. She visited families where emaciated children were at death's door and where anguished parents could do nothing but watch. One afternoon, a man whose house she had visited in the morning to do a food assessment came looking for her. "When you visited our house we had nothing

to offer you. But since you left, our hen has laid this egg," he said. "We want you to have it. Thank you for staying with us this morning."

Caritas now has over a million staff members and volunteers who are engaged in answering the call to enable the poor to transform their own lives.

Our work may take the humblest form, such as a community worker giving beans and porridge to a woman in Africa who does not know how she will feed her children. Or, we may use the power of our confederation to take the poor's message onto the global stage, to the UN, or to the world's most influential leaders.

Heroes and heroines live on for generations in the stories that are part of the living memories of societies. The vision of the founders of Caritas Internationalis is still present in the living memories of those who have followed in their footsteps. Here are some stories from the lives of Caritas staff members, volunteers and beneficiaries around the world.

Healthcare following the Haiti earthquake



Anna Van Rooyen was appointed head of Catholic Relief Services (a US member of Caritas Internationalis) for emergency health response following the January 2010 Haiti earthquake.



The day the earthquake hit Haiti, I became trapped in my office in Port-au-Prince. My colleagues didn't know if their family and friends were dead or alive. None of us was prepared for it and we were all in shock. How do you prepare for seeing thousands of people dead or severely injured?

With so many buildings down and unstable I ended up sleeping in a garden not far from the office. There was no water or electricity and communication was down. This meant that to confirm information or to talk to people, you had to go out in a car and look for them in the city. With rubble blocking the roads, this wasn't easy, but it was the only way of checking who had survived and which buildings still functioned for work purposes.

Staff who survived the earthquake were sent abroad to save them from further trauma. I went to the Dominican Republic for about four days for a rest after the disaster, but in the end I wanted to be with the team back in Port-au-Prince.

Despite the uncertainty and enormous difficulties, Catholic Relief Services along with Caritas Haiti and other Caritas member organisations, immediately started work. I was tasked with setting up and leading the health emergency response.

Within a few days we had a team of more than 100 volunteers and health professionals who wanted to help us. We were strengthened by hundreds of international medical volunteers. It was great how everybody – nationals and internationals, young and old – joined the health team and made an incredible contribution. There was a fantastic team spirit – no one ever complained.

We quickly did assessments and set up clinics in ten camps to provide healthcare. We also established secondary care in eight Catholic and faith-based hospitals in the country. Part of our strategy was also to provide public health messages to help raise people's awareness about health issues.

The François de Sales hospital in Port-au-Prince was about 80 percent destroyed in the earthquake. I was the first outsider to go there. The hospital was closed and the surviving patients were lying on the ground in the parking lot. They didn't have food, water or anything else.

A lot of the stuff I saw at the hospital, I can't talk about. It's the kind of stuff that makes you cover your kids' eyes. I know I wanted to cover mine.

The medical director of the hospital asked me for support to evacuate surviving patients. A former colleague from the World Health Organisation had just informed me that we only had two operating rooms in the capital. All the hospitals were overloaded with earthquake survivors. We took the decision there and then to re-open François de Sales. Within 48 hours we were performing operations.

One of the things that remained a challenge in those first weeks was the enormous number of cargo planes and trucks coming in with supplies that needed to be coordinated, stored and distributed. At the end of the day we had a pharmacy warehouse team of more than 15 people just coordinating this, not counting the teams dealing with food and other items.

Since the 2010 earthquake, my portfolio has quintupled. Some people say I really know how to multi-task and the Haiti earthquake has really tested that ability. Based on a strategy to strengthen the faith-based network, we are working hard to achieve an overall improvement to Haitians' access to healthcare. But it will take time.

Playing for peace in South Africa



Sr Aine Hughes is a peace builder for Caritas South Africa. She remembers the day when Caritas helped organise an alternative football World Cup in 2010.



One bitterly cold winter's morning, I arrived at a shantytown on the edge of Pretoria carrying a bucket of ash. The white remains from burnt wood would be used to mark the lines on a football pitch.

Billion-rand stadiums had been built in other cities in South Africa and teams from all over the world were coming to play in the 2010 World Cup. Our "stadium" was a clay pitch that volunteers had just cleared of stones, weeds and rubbish. Our goalposts were made of wood that we had found lying around.

I'd had the idea of organising people on our Caritas Peacebuilding Programme into teams for an event parallel to the World Cup. So, Caritas and the Damietta Peace Initiative organised 16 teams from Africa and one from France into a tournament – the Football Peace Cup.

The tournament aimed to help people reflect on themselves and to recognise the value of others. The message was that despite differences in skin colour, language, nationality, ethnicity and religion, we all belong to one human family.

The Peace Cup was taking place in a township where xenophobic violence had erupted two years before. Sixty people had died just because they were a different nationality, race or tribe.

In the townships in South Africa, people don't have electricity and so couldn't easily watch the World Cup. But their enthusiasm brought the tournament into their shanty towns as people from the international community left the relative luxury and security of the stadiums to enjoy games played by the underprivileged community.

That July morning, as the older children started to organise themselves into teams, they suddenly realised that they didn't have a ball! They disappeared and returned with plastic bags and rags. I looked on in amazement as they somehow knotted it all together into a ball and started to play. I was reminded that necessity often brings out a creativity and ingenuity that might otherwise go untapped.

The community members who had created the soccer pitch with their own hands had an enormous sense of pride and achievement. It was something so simple and yet it had profound implications for the community.

I've worked in South Africa for over thirty years and I saw how the apartheid system destroyed people's self-worth and self-confidence. With my job at Caritas, I'm always amazed and overjoyed at the awakening of the realisation in people that they have the potential and power to transform their own lives and communities.

Part of my job is holding workshops across the country to help people discover how they can use their resources to help themselves and their communities. Probably my greatest joy in my job is the inspiration I get from the poor, especially women, who are willing to give of their "nothingness" in order to help somebody else. The people I meet often have a thirst for spirituality and transformation.

The Peace Cup ran until the 3rd July – just before the real World Cup ended. I felt a great sense of triumph for the community. They had regained a sense of dignity and self-esteem. It was the first step in reclaiming their potential and power to bring about a change in their lives.

Taking the voice of the poor in Senegal to the UN

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a series of anti-poverty targets agreed by governments in 2000. “The globalisation of solidarity through the prompt achievement of the MDGs established by the Millennium Declaration is a crucial moral obligation of the international community,” said H.E. Msgr Celestino Migiliore, the then Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations in 2008.



Fr Ambroise Tine, the Secretary General of Caritas Senegal, represented Caritas Internationalis at a United Nations summit on poverty in September 2010 in New York.

When I went to the UN for Caritas Internationalis, I had three minutes to communicate what was in my mind and heart. My hope was to be the voice of the poor, those who are not getting education or chances in life, those who have no access to healthcare and those whose children will never live out their lives because of the cruel lottery of their birth.

I hoped that my three minutes would move something in the hearts of the people listening at the UN and this would make countries uphold their Millennium Development Goals promises.

It was my first time in New York. I live in Dakar, Senegal, but often go to Europe. It was incredible to see the skyscrapers, the clean streets and the fast-paced life, but I was also shocked to see people rummaging through rubbish bins for food in such a rich city.

As I told the UN, poverty is not abstract. It can be seen in the faces of millions of human beings who live it every day, especially women and children. The suffering is worldwide.

Caritas works with this poverty every day. However, the real power to combating it lies in government policy. My speech at the UN was an example of Caritas' international advocacy. Yes, we give out food and provide healthcare and education and many other things to poor communities, but we know that a shift in the thinking of the rich world is essential to “making poverty history”.

I used my time at the UN to meet many people from other NGOs, the media and also government representatives. I took the message of the silent millions to them, like the people in my country who suffer because their basic needs in life, such as food and water, health and education, aren't met.

Three other speakers from Caritas member organisations were with me at the UN. They defended everyone's right to food, water, health, education and freedom. My guide for the day was Joseph Cornelius Donnelly. He is Caritas' representative at the UN and he makes sure that Caritas' voice of the poor is heard in UN proceedings.

I think that the MDGs have made some difference to the life of poor people in Senegal. In rural areas, many children between 6 and 7 years old now have the opportunity to go to school. But good standards are still missing – some classes have 70 pupils! We have to be careful that governments don't just “pay lip service” to the MDGs without any real thought to whether they are actually helping people and giving them a future.

At the end of my day at the UN, I had a sense of under-achievement as it was difficult to see the impact of our speeches. But I was convinced that something positive would happen. As long as civil society makes governments aware of their responsibilities, governments will show their humanity and take care of the poor.

But I do still have doubts. Months after my trip to the UN, I look at places like Libya and Côte d'Ivoire where there are conflicts and it seems that financial interests are more important than human rights. Sometimes the international community moves with the financial wave rather than that of the poor. Caritas will continue to work to ensure the voices of the poor aren't drowned out when the international community gets side-tracked by other considerations.

Facing the future together in Austria



Astrid Reindl is a lawyer who works at Caritas Vienna's migrant centre in Austria.



It's 10am on Monday morning. I've already been at my desk at Caritas Vienna's migrant centre for two hours. I've been preparing for the week ahead by taking appointments and looking at my database to prepare files on clients who I'll be seeing.

My first visitor is Mr K, a 29-year-old man from Serbia. He has come to the migrant centre to help solve his financial problems and issues at home. He talks nervously about his private problems and his uncertain residence status.

Mr K is unable to work at the moment because of health issues. The money he gets from an insurance policy doesn't cover all his monthly costs and this leaves him very anxious about his responsibilities and his family's future.

I listen to him and give him a space to talk about his fears. Once he's done, we discuss possible options to help him. I give him 200 euros to keep him going as he leaves.

I've seen a lot of migrants in the course of my work here over the past six years. So many stories, so many hands of fate being dealt. I like being able to support my clients so they can cope with difficult situations. My legal training helps us work out the best judicial solutions possible, but Austrian law is being changed constantly, which makes it much more difficult for migrants.

There are 18 of us working in the migrant centre. Some are legal and social advisors, others help in the clearing office and others deal with housing. We take part in about 10,000 consultations a year, working in German, English, Turkish, Serbian, Croatian, Spanish and French.

The problems I have to deal with vary. Just now someone rang me wanting advice about what to do after he was refused residency. Another person rang asking for help looking for a new apartment. It's important that I don't give clients a false impression of what's possible, but I have to balance this with an assessment of their situation in a clear and optimistic way.

Mrs S is my next client. She has tears in her eyes as she tells me that her greatest wish is to have her son with her in Austria. I look through her documents and I promise to help her hand in a new request. I'm not that hopeful it will work. It's just a shame that the law can't see the desperation and understand the desires of the people it makes such crucial decisions about.

The demand for advice by migrants is rising because more and more of them are threatened by poverty. People come to us because they are in very precarious situations and work in jobs where income is low and security is rare.

I see myself as a kind of coach who helps them work out solutions to their problems. The hope is that this kind of support will help the migrants look ahead with more optimism and less fear.

The right climate for justice in Asia?



Fr Bonnie Mendes, the regional coordinator for Caritas Asia, tells us about his day at the Bangkok climate talks in 2009.



You see rich countries who want to use the maximum of the Earth's resources but they don't worry about the poor. They don't seem to realise people will have to suffer for this choice.

I travelled to the climate change talks in downtown Bangkok in a taxi with people from India and the Philippines. There was a sense of anticipation. We were saying to each other: "Something's got to happen!"

The Bangkok climate change talks were in September 2009, just a couple of months before the UN climate change conference COP15 in Copenhagen. We wanted consensus on the Kyoto Protocol and we wanted countries to stop delaying important climate decisions.

The Prime Minister of Thailand said at the talks, "There is no plan B. If we do not realise plan A, we go straight to plan F, which stands for failure."

I was at the meeting with Caritas representatives from Bangladesh, India, the Philippines, South Africa and Kenya. In our previous day's preparations, I made it clear that it wasn't always necessary to shout to get your view across. Using the media is important as that gets the message to many other people.

For part of the day, we split up and went to different sessions so we could lobby. I attended an adaptation session. It was the first time I'd ever attended such a big meeting on climate change and I was surprised at the attitudes of some of the countries. They tried to block anything that would mean change and some delegates made extra long speeches so others had less chance to speak.

In my country, Pakistan, there is no rain and everyone prays for it, then it comes and it is devastating. Inland, Pakistan is mountainous but then it flattens out towards the sea. Heavy rains just sweep down onto the plains and wash people's homes away. This happens quite frequently. The people don't own the land and their houses aren't built to withstand disasters.

Caritas is working with communities on adaptation and mitigation across the world with projects such as mushroom farming in Cambodia, tree planting in Pakistan and cyclone preparedness in Bangladesh. We think that with a little input communities can become less vulnerable to the effects of extreme weather.

We demonstrated on the streets of Bangkok, calling for more climate justice. I had brought three young women from Pakistan to participate in the climate talks. I think it's very important to get young people to understand the climate issue and take it back to their own countries. We sat on the pavement with placards saying things like, "Earth is slowly dying, save her, go green."

I think that with the involvement of young people there will always be some hope.

That evening we all went back to the Caritas Asia office to discuss how everyone felt. There was great suspicion that nothing would happen at an international level. If that was so, we'd have to continue doing what we could at the grassroots. But we need governments and experts to guide us in our choices and initiatives. Without their backing how are the poor ever going to be able to live with climate change?

A backbone of volunteers in Uruguay



Sofie Labadie helps Caritas Uruguay with fundraising and volunteers in her spare time.

I'm just finishing my thesis in psychology and I work with children with learning difficulties. I'm also about to get married! These things help me in my personal and professional growth, but the development of my heart is in the hands of Caritas.

I started working with Caritas Uruguay at the beginning of 2009. Every year, they invite people who are interested in working with them to come along and talk to them. When I went to the meeting they talked about their work and their organisation and something inside me told me that I should work with them.

In the beginning, I went along and did anything they needed me to do. But as the training progressed, I started to focus on volunteers and donations. These two things are so important to Caritas Uruguay, and without them they couldn't carry out their mission to support the poor and vulnerable.

A typical day starts with me answering the emails of people who have offered donations. People want to send us all sorts of things such as clothes, furniture and things they no longer use. Caritas Uruguay doesn't just rely on personal donations, but also encourages businesses to engage in social responsibility.

We coordinate the donations coming in and match them up with the people who most need them. We help all sorts of people in various ways. We give people in prison advice and support and help them get back into society once they're released. We help women who are victims of violence. We help drug addicts beat their dependency. We do many more things too.

In my job it's important that I answer people who either need help or who want to donate quickly. We try to be as positive as possible and convey how grateful we are. We are very friendly and offer a personal service to people. We want them to have full confidence in what we provide and consider us as a good example of social commitment and Christian values.

We are working hard to build up our team of volunteers. Those who offer their time to us do lots of different things. They may give legal or financial advice to people in difficulty, or they may support schools or help out various disadvantaged groups in poor neighbourhoods.

Even though Caritas is known on an international and national level, we've discovered that the young know the least about us. We're working to change this so they will be interested in our work and may decide to join us.

What I love about Caritas is the warmth and friendliness in our office. People are happy, despite the difficulties we sometimes face, and the smallest achievement is a cause for celebration. There's a real sense of openness, joy, dedication, strength and resilience.

Life with HIV in Chad



“After the combatants raped me, an aunt of mine brought me to the hospital for HIV screening. The doctor tested me and said I need to be tested three months later on. The second screening tested HIV-positive. I felt desperate because AIDS is incurable and I thought I would die at any minute,” said Zenaba.

Despite such trauma, hope has entered Zenaba’s life in the form of Hina (meaning “we are resurrected”), an association for people with HIV/AIDS. Funded by Caritas Chad (SECADEV), Hina provides a variety of services to people with HIV, such as food assistance and moral support and helps them become more self-reliant.

With Hina’s support, Zenaba has learned to take care of her own health and that of her husband. “We need to eat a good diet as this is important for people with HIV. If we can afford it, we try to eat meat, fruit and vegetables.”

Her daily life has now taken on a routine which offers security and helps her deal with her HIV status.

“As a Muslim, I begin my day with prayer. Then, as is the local custom, I go around to my neighbours to pass on regards before I prepare breakfast,” says Zenaba.

Usually, Zenaba would fetch water after breakfast. But this heavy and difficult job is now done by someone provided by Hina/Caritas Chad.

At 9am, Zenaba will go to the market to buy some things for lunch as she is very conscious that she has to eat well to stay healthy. After she’s prepared and eaten lunch, she sits and chats with her friends and neighbours under the trees.

The day passes uneventfully and at night Zenaba sleeps in the single room in her and her husband’s house. Their two children sleep at her mother’s home where there is more space.

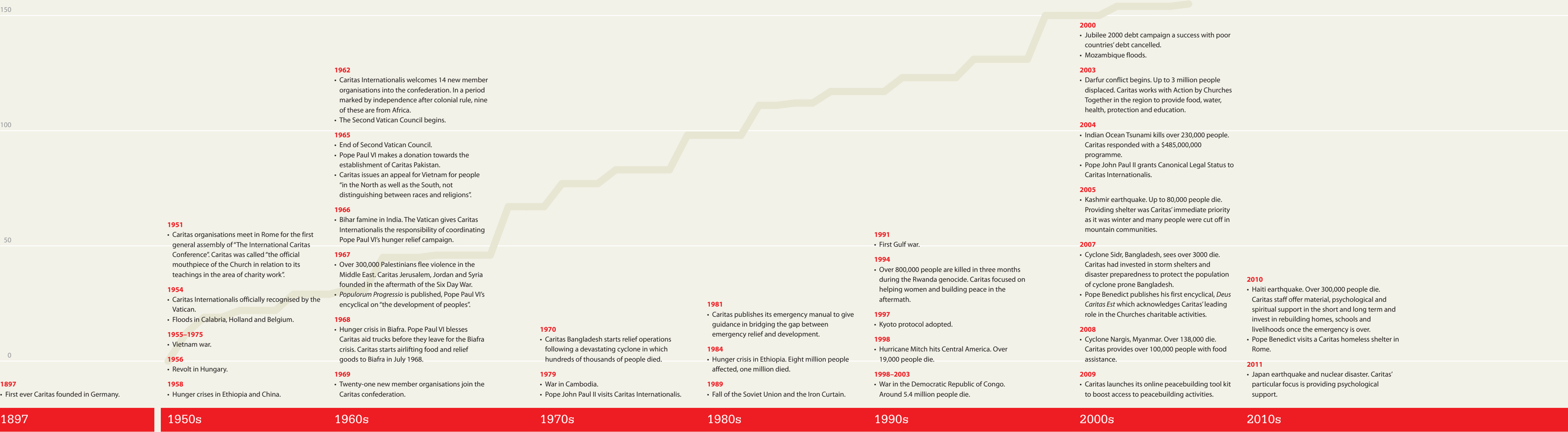
Zenaba’s dream is to have more children. She has learned from Hina/Caritas Chad that with the right medication, her HIV status should not cause a problem if she decides to extend her family.

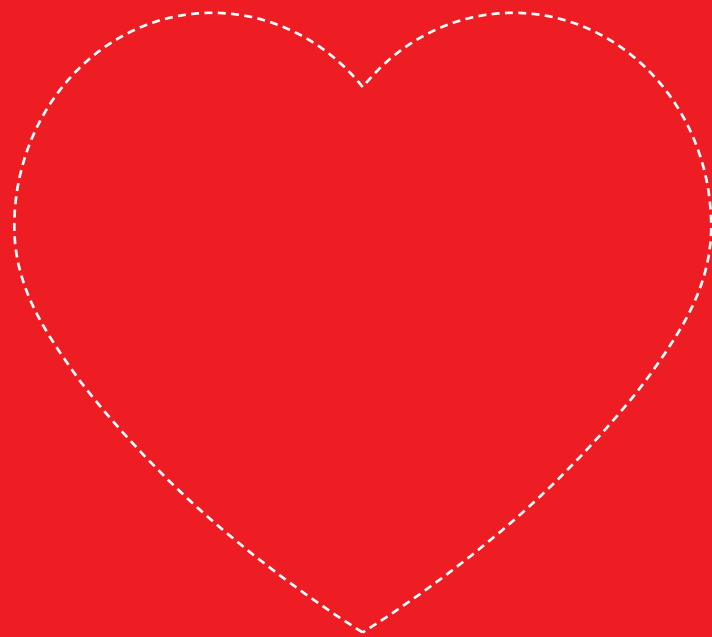
“I am a young woman and the two children I have are not enough,” she says.

Zenaba, 22, was raped by soliders who captured her town, Mongo, five years ago. She had been sleeping at home when the soldiers arrived. They tied her up and attacked her along with three other women.



Historical timeline





www
caritas
.org



Palazzo San Calisto
V-00120
Vatican City State
+39 06 698 797 99