UNITINGWORLD

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A partnership built for the storm season

Working together to protect lives in Solomon Islands

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.



Walking alongside our partners in the Solomon Islands

A small team from UnitingWorld recently visited Solomon Islands to see first-hand the impact of your support.

Our partner, the United Church in the Solomon Islands (UCSI), continues to build climate resilience, prepare communities for disasters and promote healthy, safe relationships. Rev Siera Bird, UnitingWorld's International Program Manager for the Pacific and a Solomon Islander, shares what she saw.

Severe Tropical Cyclone Maila hit Western and Choiseul Provinces in April. What did you see when you visited?

Cyclone Maila damaged homes, schools, health facilities, roads and water supply systems, leaving thousands of people with their lives and work disrupted. But I also saw the best of the community spring to life. People are still recovering, but I saw young people cooking and caring for elders and people with disabilities, while others searched for food and helped their neighbours repair and clean up their properties after the cyclone.

How is disaster preparedness making a difference?

UCSI has been training Community-Based Disaster Risk Management Committees village by village. The communities I visited were full of gratitude, because the training meant they knew exactly what to do when the cyclone hit. The UCSI team are really excited to see the community disaster committees activating early, just as they were trained, and showing people what to do and getting them to safety. It was remarkable to hear that no lives were lost in such a severe cyclone.

What changes have you seen on gender equality?

In Vanua village, one of the first communities to take part in the UnitingWorld-supported Gender Equality Theology training back in 2019, I saw real change. One woman, Lovelyn, told me her husband, who once argued about women's roles and work, now cooks and helps at home. Rev Wilson Agiri, who hosted us in his church, spent much of his time cooking for us and caring for the sick in his community, work that was traditionally left to women. It felt to me like a whole community shift is slowly happening through God's grace.

What do you hope for the future of this partnership?

I pray my people can enjoy the abundance and fullness of life God intends. Gender-based violence is still at crisis levels and that weighs heavily on my heart. People are very vulnerable to disasters, but there's many things we can do to help. I hope and pray we will have a closer partnership built on shared wisdom between people in the Solomon Islands and Australia. There's so much we can learn from each other.

Thank you for making this transformative partnership in Solomon Islands possible through your support.



Behind the cover photo

During her visit, Rev Siera preached on Trinity Sunday about God's character of partnership. In it, she shared an invitation to care for creation, using a local river, once wide, now narrowed by logging, as her example. The woman pictured, a 75-year-old retired teacher and former pastor, came to thank her afterwards, as she washes in the river each day and has noticed the drastic changes over the years.

Fifteen years on, every child is in school

In 2008, just 38 per cent of children in targeted Dalit* communities along the India-Pakistan border were even enrolled in school. Today, that number is 100 per cent, across a project that has grown from 10 villages to 20, now reaching 9,678 people. Whether you've been with us since the beginning or joined more recently, this is what your support has built.

This year, we commissioned an independent evaluation of the project, confirming what these numbers already show: real, sustained change. Back then, literacy across these communities sat at just 40 per cent. Today, the project runs 23 study centres across those 20 villages, reaching families in 2,700 households, and more than 90 students have gone on to graduate university or pursue postgraduate study, the first in their communities' history to do so.

"Together, UnitingWorld and the Diocese of Amritsar have transformed entire Dali communities — empowering children to pursue education, and creating lasting change," says Om Prakash, former Project Coordinator.

Power is shifting hands too. Since leadership training began, 1,665 people have taken part, and Dalit communities who were once completely excluded from decision-making now hold leadership positions on village councils. Self-help groups are turning small loans into real businesses: Jaspal Singh, from Dyal Bhatti village, bought a jute bag-making machine with hers. *"Starting my own business has been the biggest change in my life,"* she says.

But of course, so much remains unfinished. Families raising children with disabilities still struggle to access entitlements they're owed. Financial pressures bear down on families, forcing teenagers to take up daily wage work, and adolescent girls remain at high risk for dropping out of school. Border tensions bring school closures and movement restrictions that interrupt everything.

The former Bishop of Amritsar, Rev Bishop P.K. Samantaroy told us that, even with less funding, these communities can sustain what we've already built together. But sustaining isn't the same as reaching all the people and communities we can. Families of children with disabilities, girls at risk, young people drifting away. **Getting to all of them and doing all the good we can is what the next chapter requires.**

**Dalit* *is a term derived from Sanskrit meaning "broken," "oppressed," or "downtrodden". It is a self-designation used by social groups across South Asia who were historically marginalized in Hindu caste society.*



Although Dalen's parents were hesitant to let him continue his education as he is Deaf, the Diocese project team encouraged them to enrol him in the study centre to support his learning. He is progressing very well, now studying in Grade 10 and playing the sport of Kabaddi at a high level.

Australian Aid

This project also received support from the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program. (ANCP).

Health and food security in Timor-Leste

During Lent this year, we shared stories about the impact of the climate resilience work of our partner, FUSONA, in Timor-Leste. UnitingWorld supporters are helping FUSONA to bring food security and health improvements, and the work continues to expand.

In the first quarter of 2026, our partners identified 125 vulnerable families across two villages to join the project. Ninety families received support to build productive kitchen gardens for their households.

A team of 19 community health workers like Febiana Colo (pictured) has been recruited to support project participants. They delivered health assessments for over 120 toddlers and taught families to make nutritious meals. Child malnutrition has been reduced in the communities served.

Australian Aid

This project also received support from the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP)



Thank you to all those who supported Lent Event. Together we raised nearly $223,000 to help families in Timor-Leste and beyond with vital clean water, health education and climate-smart farming support. Find out more about the work in Timor-Leste at www.unitingworld.org.au/timor-leste

A reflection from Tacloban

Rev Cyrus Kung, Church Engagement Manager (SA & WA)

I sat in a humid room in Tacloban City, Philippines, listening to Filipino theologians speak about what it means to follow Jesus in their context.

I was there with Rev Philip Gardner, General Secretary, SA Synod, and Dr Sureka Goringe, UnitingWorld National Director, representing the Uniting Church in Australia at the 13th Quadrennial General Assembly of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP).



Assembly delegates spent a day at a community farm project, established on donated land after Typhoon Haiyan when all food stores had been lost. The farm is still going strong, with community members sharing in the produce in proportion to their work.

Tacloban knows something about resilience. Many will remember its name spoken in the same breath as the devastation of Typhoon Haiyan in 2013*. To sit there, more than a decade later, among Christians full of faith and fire, was itself a kind of sermon.

The Assembly gathered under a theme simple and demanding in equal measure: "Walking with Jesus: Journeying with the *Anawim*". *Anawim* is a Hebrew word referring to the bowed-down ones, the poor, those who have nothing left to lean on except God.

In Mary's Magnificat, the *Anawim* are the ones God lifts while the proud are scattered.

And in Jesus, God doesn't send the *Anawim* a message from a safe distance - God becomes one of them, entering the story from the bottom.

I had read of this theology before, but I was struck when I heard it spoken by people for whom it isn't academic. They weren't reflecting on poverty from a comfortable distance. They were reflecting on it from within and finding, in Jesus, a living reason to keep going.

I thought of the communities we walk alongside in Australia: the newly arrived, the isolated, the ones for whom Sunday morning is the one place they feel truly seen. Different context, same gospel. The same Jesus who moved toward the least and the lost calls us to do the same.

This is what partnership through UnitingWorld means. We may be far away, but we are walking the same road. When we support our UCCP sisters and brothers, through prayer, through giving, through showing up, we are not offering charity from above. We are joining a journey already underway, toward a world where the hungry are filled, the bowed-down are lifted, and no one is left behind.

** In 2013 Typhoon Haiyan, also known as Super Typhoon Yolanda in Philippines, caused over 6000 deaths in Philippines. Because the Tacloban area has a high population in low-lying areas, it was a major centre of devastation and loss of life.*

Uniting Church schools – Faith and Education Together

For the first time in 17 years, a formal gathering of educators, principals, board members and chaplains from Uniting Church schools met in June to connect, inspire and share wisdom.

Hosted by UCA Queensland Synod and The Lakes College in Queensland, the Uniting Connections Conference brought around 70 people from 17 schools, colleges and other groups from across four Synods with the theme of Faith and Education Together.

Highlights of the conference included a keynote address from UCA President Rev Charissa Suli, who encouraged those present to see the value and dignity of every child they come in contact with.

Mardi Lumsden, UnitingWorld's Church Engagement Team Leader, was there and enjoyed connecting with chaplains and educational staff from across the country, as well as sharing what UnitingWorld has to offer school communities as part of the extended Uniting Church family.

"It was great to hear that service learning and missional opportunities for students are still really important for helping young people understand their place in the world," she said.



Mardi joined a discussion panel at the event, raising awareness about UnitingWorld and opportunities for schools to get involved in our work. Photo credit: Laura Seeds, Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod.

Learning together with a Pacific perspective

When Antony McMullen, Church Engagement Manager for Vic/Tas, visited Bacchus Marsh Uniting Church, the congregation experienced a shared act of learning, listening and reflection, exploring climate justice from the perspective of communities across the Pacific.

Antony facilitated a simulation game that invited people to think about unequal power relationships and the very different impacts of climate change. The room was divided into two teams: one representing Pacific Island communities and one representing Australia. A children's colouring activity brought brightness and creativity into the room.

The simulation helped show, in a clear and practical way, that those who have contributed least to climate change are often among those who face its sharpest effects.

This is not an abstract issue. For UnitingWorld's partner churches across Asia, Africa and the Pacific, climate change affects homes, livelihoods, food security, safety and the future of whole communities. Our partner churches are at the heart of local responses, walking alongside people through change, loss and hope.

The activity did not try to offer easy answers. Instead, it opened space for deeper awareness and care, using gentle humour to help the congregation engage with a serious topic.

The visit reflected something central to UnitingWorld's work: partnership begins with listening. It grows through mutual respect, prayer, learning and shared responsibility. Australian congregations have a role to play by standing with our partner churches, supporting locally-led work, and keeping climate justice before our communities.



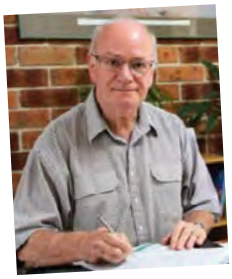
It reminded us that our relationships across the Pacific are not distant or symbolic. They are part of who we are as a church.

UnitingWorld gives thanks for congregations who continue to learn, pray, give and act in support of partner churches across Asia, Africa and the Pacific.

Where there's a Will, there's a way

In our UnitingWorld Sunday service this year, we focus on what "life in abundance" means for the future, dignity and purpose of all people.

UnitingWorld supporters continue to show us how much they care about our global neighbours, not just through gifts now, but by leaving UnitingWorld a gift in their Will.



Uniting Church minister and former UnitingWorld fundraiser, Rev Paul Bartlett, says his connection with overseas church partners is why he has included UnitingWorld in his Will.

"I see the faces of people who remind me of my own family and see how hard they work to care for each other. I think about how far a gift can go toward completely transforming their lives. And I trust deeply in UnitingWorld's ability to use wisely and well the resources I've tried to steward faithfully throughout my life," he said.

Wording you can use in your Will

To leave a bequest to UnitingWorld in your Will, you may like to use these words:

"I give and bequeath the sum of $____ (or a percentage of the estate or other provision) free of all duties to UnitingWorld (ABN 47 817 183 926), an agency of the National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, to be used for such of the purposes of UnitingWorld, as shall be decided by UnitingWorld."

If you'd like to specify which area of UnitingWorld's work you want to support, please contact us for guidance on how to word it.

Simple steps for remembering UnitingWorld in your Will:

- Consult your legal advisor to ensure the option you have chosen best reflects your intentions.
- Discuss your decision with your family and loved ones. This will ensure they understand and support your reasons for choosing to help UnitingWorld in such a powerful way.
- If you have an existing Will and want to add a bequest to UnitingWorld you can use the suggested wording.
- If you do include UnitingWorld in your Will, please let us know. You don't have to tell us, but we would love the opportunity to thank you.

For help with giving a gift in your Will, visit unitingworld.org.au/bequest or contact us - phone 1800 998 122 or email info@unitingworld.org.au

Small steps to better nutrition for Siti



Vegetables were not a regular part of the diet for Siti, a 25-year-old homemaker, her husband and young daughter. They relied on traveling vegetable sellers who visited their village on Alor Island only a couple of times a month.

But after seeing positive changes in her neighbours who had joined the Healthy Kitchen program*, Siti became interested in growing her own food. The program team provided her with seven types of fruit and vegetable seedlings, enabling her to transform her small 3 x 5 metre yard into a productive home garden.

Within just three months, her garden began to yield results, and she started to feed her family with fresh home-grown produce.

Despite taking her first steps to a more nutritious diet, when Siti became pregnant again, she was diagnosed with Chronic Energy Deficiency, a condition that increases health risks for both mother and baby. During this critical time, access to adequate nutrition is even more essential.

The Healthy Kitchen program team responded by providing additional support – four laying hens, whose eggs became an important source of protein for the family. With a more consistent and balanced diet, Siti went on to have a healthier pregnancy and safely delivered her second child, who weighed a healthy 3.5 kilograms.

Siti can now harvest fresh vegetables from her garden every day, and her family has consistent protein intake throughout the week from the eggs. During times of abundant harvest, she also sells the excess produce to supplement the household income.

Siti's story shows that meaningful change can begin with a simple initiative. With the right support, small steps can grow into sustainable solutions that strengthen household food security and improve family nutrition.

Australian Aid

*This work is conducted by our partner, the Christian Evangelical Church in Timor, Nusa Timur Tenggara, eastern Indonesia, with support from UnitingWorld and the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).



Blessings through water in Zimbabwe

UnitingWorld has been supporting improved access to drinking water and nutritious foods at schools in rural Zimbabwe*. The headmistress of one of the primary schools has expressed her gratitude, saying:

"The solarised borehole has completely changed our school. Pupils now have access to clean drinking water... the green garden has lifted everyone's spirits—this is a true blessing."

Australian Aid

*The work is conducted by our partner, the Methodist Development and Relief Agency of the Methodist Church of Zimbabwe, with support from UnitingWorld and the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP)

Weaving stronger partnerships in the Pacific

We recently hosted our Annual Pacific Partners Forum in Nadi, Fiji, bringing together delegates from ten Pacific church partners from across the region with a focus on climate resilience and ending gender-based violence.

We asked delegates about the challenges they're facing, what "abundant life" looks like in their communities and what partnership means to them. Below are some of their answers and messages to you!



Rev Tomasi Jale, TDRCC Coordinator, Methodist Church in Fiji

We're so grateful for our partnership with the UCA because you helped the church kickstart disaster preparedness across the community, and now we're working to embed the impact in ways that stick, using theology and indigenous wisdom. *Vinaka*.



Diane Kose Morea, Women's Ministry Coordinator, United Church in Papua New Guinea

We have a shared background of faith, with Methodists, Presbyterians and LMS missionaries and that is so important here in Papua New Guinea as we work to educate men and women and end the crisis of gender-based violence.



Sonia Feaomoeata, Theology Student, Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga

The power of forums like this for me is in hearing different human stories. It made me realise the ways we're the same and how we're connected, facing the same challenges. It helps me see the bigger picture of God working in the world.



Rev Kalepo Toai, Congregational Christian Church of Tuvalu

Life in abundance in Tuvalu would look like growing our own food, catching our own fish and for there to be enough, rather than importing it from outside. Also, a sense of faith and togetherness, as we act on the threat of climate change.



Rev Maleta Tenten, Secretary for Mission, Kiribati Uniting Church

My message to the world has been the same for more than a decade: please help Kiribati and the Pacific. Our islands are disappearing and we don't know when we will lose our homes. Abundant life for my people would be a safe and secure future for the next generations.



Rev Tofiga Tusiane, Methodist Church of Samoa

I value the willingness to connect and interconnect our peoples across the Pacific and Australia. Together we have great power to change the Pacific for the better, and by extension, change the world for the better.



Rev Hillary Bero, Congregational Minister, United Church in the Solomon Islands

I wish God's blessing for the Church in Australia and the Solomon Islands as we walk together to address gender-based violence and the impacts of climate change. There is great need, so we are called to bring fullness of life for every person… that is a great mission for the Church.



Rev Leinamau Seru, Presbyterian Church in Vanuatu

We are a communal people in Vanuatu, and your giving not only helps one person, it helps the whole community. And when you help the whole community, ripples go out helping lot of other people and communities in the outer islands. Thank you *tumas*.

Deepening Our Partnerships in Tuvalu

Rev Apwee Ting, International Partnerships Manager

Although my recent visit was my first time setting foot in Tuvalu, it felt like visiting friends because of my years of online conversations with the leaders of the *Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu* (EKT), the Congregational Christian Church of Tuvalu.

UnitingWorld has been heavily engaged with EKT over the past few years, discussing issues that are important for the people of Tuvalu. I have appreciated the opportunity to listen to EKT's perspectives regarding the Australia-Tuvalu Falepili Union Treaty and the experiences of Tuvaluan PALM workers who are living and working in Australia. These conversations have reminded me that partnership begins with listening.

The recent signing of the partnership agreement between the Uniting Church in Australia and EKT represents an important step in formalising a relationship that has already been growing through trust, friendship and shared faith, and expresses our commitment to walk together in Christ.

During my visit, I was deeply moved by the resilience and faith of the people in Tuvalu. Living with the realities of climate change, they continue to witness to hope, prayer and community. Their challenges are not only environmental or political. They also are spiritual, touching questions of identity, land and the future.

As a church, we are called not simply to stand in solidarity from a distance but to accompany our Tuvaluan friends with humility and compassion. I believe this partnership invites us to share each other's joys and burdens and to bear witness together to God's love.

I returned from Tuvalu with gratitude, renewed hope and a deeper conviction that God calls us to walk together in faith, especially with communities facing the difficult challenges.



From the National Director



"I've just spent two days with the Christian Conference of Asia, sitting with church leaders who between them carry the hopes of fifty million Christians across this region. I asked them what keeps them awake at night.

The answer I heard most was forced migration and statelessness. Desperate people crossing borders in search of safety and a livelihood because of climate change, poverty and conflict. Young people leaving because there is no work. Families abandoning traditional land as harvests fail. The same forces, again and again, falling hardest on those least able to absorb them.

And yet what I heard, again and again, were stories of people of faith stepping into the breach to love their neighbours, no matter where they came from. In Indonesia, our church partners in Nusa Timur Tenggara have built a "House of Hope" for survivors of trafficking. In the Philippines, churches of every denomination shelter and defend migrant workers far from home. Rev Charissa Suli, President of the Uniting Church in Australia, spoke of communities losing their ancestral land to rising seas, reminding us that we cannot separate people's suffering from the forces driving it: climate change, inequality and conflict.

Our own Rev Apwee Ting saw it again recently in Tuvalu, where rising seas aren't a future risk but a present reality. The new partnership agreement between the Uniting Church in Australia and the *Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu* is our answer to exactly this: standing with church partners so people can live, work and sustain their families in the place they call home. It's the same work our partners in places like Sumba are doing right now, helping families hold their ground before hardship forces them to leave. Thank you to the many people who donated to support that vital work in Sumba and beyond.

We who follow Christ are called to roll up our sleeves and step into a suffering world with good news for the poor, healing for the sick, and freedom for the oppressed.

We are called for such a time as this.

Are we ready?



Dr Sureka Goringe
National Director
UnitingWorld

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