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Caritas Internationalis



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Relevance

Caritas Internationalis contributes globally via its charity, philanthropy, and humanitarian activities. Beyond its practical interventions, Caritas has influenced academic debates by serving insights into the role of faith-based organizations in development and social welfare. Its active presence shows the intersection of religious value-based organization with third sector practices which also enriches theoretical and empirical discussions. Caritas is not only a global actor in addressing poverty, inequality, and crises but also a subject of scholarly attention for the researchers, students, and practitioners.

URL

<https://www.caritas.org/>

Introduction

Caritas Internationalis is a global Catholic relief, development, and social service organization. It is a confederation of over 160 organizational members who are working at the grass roots in almost every country of the world. Caritas translates as “*love between people*.” It works with the poor, vulnerable, and excluded, regardless of race or religion. Primarily, it is inspired by Gospel values and Catholic social teaching; Caritas responds to emergencies, promotes integral human development, and works on the causes of poverty and conflict.

Brief History

The first Caritas was founded in Germany in 1897 by Lorenz Werthmann. In the twentieth century, Giovanni Battista Montini, the future Pope Paul VI, laid the foundations for an international network, setting up Caritas Internationalis in 1951. In 1954, Caritas International was officially recognized (Caritas Internationalis, 2025a; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2025; Gomes, 2021).

Objectives

The core objective of Caritas Internationalis is to save lives, relieve suffering, and help rebuild livelihoods and communities in the longer term. It

seeks to ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable can survive crises, recover, and live in safe and secure environments (Caritas Internationalis, 2025b). Guided by core Christian religious values and Catholic social teaching, Caritas also promotes integral human development and addresses the structural reasons of sufferings and disputes (Gomes, 2021; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2025).

Activities

Caritas responds practically to humanitarian crises. For instance, it made significant contributions during the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, the Haiti earthquake in 2010, the Turkey-Syria earthquake, and conflicts such as the Rwanda Genocide in 1994, the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s, and the Darfur Crisis. Recently, it has provided large-scale assistance during the Ukraine conflict.

Examples include Caritas Syria's response to the 2023 earthquake, which supported 71 centers with food parcels, hygiene kits, water packages, mattresses, and blankets, alongside long-term work on rebuilding schools and shelters. In Ukraine, more than 1.1 million people have received assistance, including housing, food, protection, cash, and humanitarian supplies.

Structure and Governance

National Caritas organizations are autonomous under their bishops but operate collectively as part of the Caritas Internationalis confederation, which is a body of the Catholic Church. Each member adapts responses according to country and community contexts while remaining united under the global Caritas framework.

Funding

Although not detailed in the above text, Caritas Internationalis generally relies on donations, contributions from Catholic communities, and international partnerships. Its confederation members also mobilize resources locally and globally to

sustain both emergency and development programs.

Major Accomplishments

Caritas has achieved global recognition through its humanitarian responses and advocacy. It provided critical aid during the Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004), Haiti earthquake (2010), Rwanda Genocide (1994), and the Balkan conflicts (1990s) (Caritas Internationalis, 2024). Caritas Syria supported earthquake-affected communities in 2023 by distributing food, hygiene kits, and shelter materials (Caritas Internationalis, 2024). In Ukraine, over 1.1 million people have received housing, food, and emergency aid since the escalation of war (Caritas Spes, 2025). Beyond relief, Caritas advances climate justice, ethical migration, and Sustainable Development Goals, making it a key actor in humanitarian and development debates (Tomalin, 2012; Ferris, 2005).

Cross-References

- ▶ [Catholic Relief Services](#)
- ▶ [Civil Society and Disasters](#)
- ▶ [Disaster-Related Philanthropy](#)
- ▶ [Faith-Based Organizations](#)
- ▶ [International Nongovernmental Organizations](#)
- ▶ [NGOs and Humanitarian Assistance](#)

Competing Interest Declaration The author(s) has no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this manuscript.

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Further Reading

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