

Tuesday, 14 November, 2017

## CARITAS JOINS AUSTRALIAN AID AGENCIES' JOINT APPEAL

Caritas Australia welcomes the announcement by Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, of a Myanmar Bangladesh emergency appeal, launched by Australia's leading aid agencies.

Eight of Australia's major humanitarian organisations have issued a joint plea for urgent funds to help nearly a million people who have fled violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

Over 600,000 people who identify as Rohingya, mostly women and children, have fled to Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh since August 25. This is in addition to the over 200,000 Rohingya refugees who were already in Bangladesh. Shelter, blankets, food, clean drinking water, sanitation and health care are urgently needed.

Under the appeal, which is supported by the ABC, the Australian Government will match donations to Australian Red Cross and Australia for UNHCR up to a total of \$5 million. It is also working closely with the other agencies participating in the appeal, including Caritas, to respond to the crisis.

Caritas Australia's CEO, Paul O'Callaghan, said he supported the Foreign Minister's effort to galvanize the Australian community.

"This support provides life-saving help for the hundreds of thousands of people in desperate need."

Caritas Bangladesh has already been responding to the immediate needs of the refugees by providing food items such as lentils, salt, sugar and cooking oil, as well as basic cooking utensils, to over 29,000 families.

Francis Atul Sarker, Executive Director of Caritas Bangladesh, said Caritas has reached about one-third of the population of new arrivals – but that much more help is needed.

"We are facing the threat of an epidemic because people are living in such dire circumstances. Without clean water and sanitation an outbreak of cholera could easily occur," Mr Sarker said.

Caritas Bangladesh has deployed experts in health, hygiene, sanitation, education and child protection into the camps, so that aid is focused on the most urgent cases.

To donate, visit the <http://www.abc.net.au/appeals/> or Caritas Australia's Asia Emergency Appeal webpage, <http://www.caritas.org.au/rohingya> or call 1800 024 413.

*Caritas is part of the CAN DO Consortium (Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations), comprised of Caritas Australia, Act for Peace, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency Australia, Anglican Board of Mission, Anglican Overseas Aid, the Australian Lutheran World Service, Transform Aid International (Baptist World Aid Australia) and UnitingWorld.*

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