



PROJECT COMPASSION 2020– INTERNATIONAL SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Mrs Florida Senis Rafer

Program Officer

Socio Pastoral Action Center Foundation Inc. (SPACFI)

Camarines Norte, Philippines (Caritas Australia Partner Organisation)

For over two decades, Philippines based international aid and development expert, Mrs Florida Senis Rafer, has served on the frontlines of the battle to end poverty, advocating for, and assisting some of the world's most marginalised people.

Mrs Rafer, who is also known as Ate Piday, is the Program Officer at Caritas Australia's partner organisation, the Socio- Pastoral Action Centre Foundation Inc. (SPACFI) based in Camarines Norte, Philippines. She has held a wide range of positions within the organisation and brings considerable expertise to the work of Caritas Australia through its partnership with SPACFI.

SPACFI and Caritas Australia work together to improve the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of vulnerable communities in the Philippines. Together, they deliver long term development programs focused on health, education, livelihoods, community capacity building, indigenous rights, inter-cultural exchange, safe drinking water, sanitation, housing support, protection, disaster risk reduction and emergency assistance.

Mrs Rafer has encountered many challenges and rewards in her work as an aid and development professional. First employed by SPACFI as a community organiser she helped to spearhead various programs serving vulnerable communities such as the fisher folks and farmers of her region. Whilst challenging, she has found working alongside such communities very rewarding, empowering them to work together, and become agents of their own change.

"I find much fulfillment in my role walking alongside a community in great need, assisting them in positive ways to be agents of their own development," she says.

Currently, her attention is focused on a program dedicated to assisting the country's Indigenous Manide people, who due to systemic discrimination live in poverty. Through the initiative, Mrs Rafer has been able to help participants, who live across six municipalities, to advocate for their land rights, obtain employment and secure access to housing, health and educational services.

During Project Compassion, Caritas' annual Lenten fundraising appeal, Mrs Rafer will be visiting Australia to talk to school students, parishioners and to members of the broader community about the aid and development work that SPACFI and Caritas Australia delivers in the Philippines.

She will share the story of **Shirley**, a Manide Indigenous woman and mother of four who has faced poverty, discrimination and exclusion. Thanks to Caritas Australia's supporters Shirley was able to secure training as a health worker and assume a leading role in her community working to pave the way for a better future.

Mrs Rafer is the embodiment of the **Project Compassion** theme of **Go Further Together** working in solidarity with vulnerable indigenous communities. Her humanitarian work supports indigenous communities to become more self-reliant and self-sufficient in the face of discrimination and disadvantage.

Mrs Florida Senis Rafer will be in Australia from 24th February until 13th March 2020.

For more information please contact Caritas Media: Nicole Clements on 0408 869 833/nicolec@caritas.org.au or caritasmedia@caritas.org.au

The Catholic agency for international aid and development

Address: 24-32 O'Riordan St, Alexandria NSW 2015

Phone: 1800 024 413 **Fax:** +61 2 8306 3401

Email: questions@caritas.org.au **ABN:** 90 970 605 069

Join us online at:

www.caritas.org.au



ACFID
MEMBER