

ACT FOR PEACE

MAGAZINE | WINTER 2024

ACTING FOR PEACE
IN WAR TORN GAZA

FUTURE PROOFING
FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Empowering people
to rebuild their lives

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Act for Peace is the international humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia. Confronting injustice together through the global Act Alliance.



Zimbabwe, Mikaela O'Neil / Act for Peace

Act for Peace gratefully acknowledges the support of the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program.

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ACTING FOR PEACE TOGETHER



Home is where the heart is

Everyone deserves a safe place to belong, but for people displaced by conflict and disaster, home is often sacrificed in search of safety. But thanks to your generous support, many people around the world can create a new place to call home for their families. Here they share what home means to them.

*names changed to protect privacy





Empowering people to rebuild their lives



Jordan, Khaled Alswidan / Act for Peace

PATHWAY OUT OF POVERTY

One of the most effective ways to support people who are displaced is to ensure our programs contribute to long-term, sustainable change through a locally led approach.

People who have had to flee their homes to find safety often end up living in what was only intended to be a short-term, emergency relief situation for the long-term. Refugee camps are often at capacity and resources are highly strained, which increases protection risks for vulnerable communities.

Complex problems like these require long-term, sustainable solutions.

That's why Act for Peace is supporting the Department of Services for Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) in Jordan and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church - Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (DICAC) to implement a holistic 'Graduation Out of Poverty' approach in refugee communities.

The Forsa (opportunity) project in Jordan and the Tesfa (hope) project in Ethiopia will empower people find a long-term pathway out of poverty.

"IT'S A VERY PURPOSEFUL PROGRAM WITH TRAINING AND MORAL SUPPORT. THEY WERE WITH ME AT EVERY STAGE. IT OPENED UP MORE SCOPE FOR ME THAN I COULD'VE EVER IMAGINED." ABIA*



50 families participate in each program over two years. Families like Abia's* [pictured previous page] who fled Syria to find safety in Jordan. Abia has built a successful pastry catering business thanks to the skills and support she received through the program.

This life changing project provides ongoing mentoring and training to build their businesses so they have a secure, reliable income. Participants learn technical and vocational skills, business and life skills, income-generation planning and financial literacy. The program includes financial support, job referrals and other services.

Following the success of the program in Jordan, Senior Development Manager at Act for Peace, Stephanie Lenert, visited Ethiopia to meet with some of the families who have started their

journey of transformation through the Tesfa program.

"I was excited to meet the project participants and hear their aspirations for the future," says Stephanie. "Everyone had a strong vision to create a livelihood and described what self-reliance would mean for their family."

Konjit* [pictured below] experienced unimaginable abuse and hardship and found herself alone in Addis Ababa, unable to provide for her four children. But Tesfa has given her hope for a brighter future.

"Before this, I was sick from anxiety, but when I found this, I was filled with joy," says Konjit*. "With this opportunity, I will work morning and night and change myself. I feel like I have been born again."

*names changed to protect privacy

This approach
positions
refugees as the
main actors in
their own
solutions.



Ethiopia, Genaye Eshetu / Act for Peace



Acting for peace in a war zone

The reality of living through the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza is difficult to grasp. The impact of the conflict is devastating for the entire population, with the majority no longer having a safe place to belong.

Behind the images in the media of buildings, hospitals and schools destroyed, are hundreds of thousands of people who^o are uprooted from their homes. And now they are fleeing camps to escape the violence, (such as the image above, taken from our local partner's van). In the chaos and conflict, families, children and infants are caught in the cross-fire – with devastating loss of life on a profound scale.

We believe that people who have been displaced by conflict have the right to access healthcare. Especially in places like war-torn Gaza.

Through long-term partnerships with local organisations, Act for Peace is working to achieve this. We continue to support the Near East Council of Churches Gaza's Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) who, despite their own individual losses, are working tirelessly to provide vital humanitarian assistance and protection to the civilians of Gaza.

And it's this incredible dedication that brings hope.

Your generosity is providing survivors with glimpses of hope through your love in action. According to DSPR's Executive Director, Nader Abu Amsha, what might seem like minor acts – a hygiene kit, or a small amount of emergency cash support – makes a world of difference to people living in the war zone.



BEING COMMITTED TO ACTING FOR PEACE MEANS BEING PRESENT IN THE WORLD'S DARKEST PLACES, DURING PEOPLE'S GREATEST HOUR OF NEED.

Nader recounts a story of a woman who received a hygiene kit after attending a health awareness session. He says the dignity and hope represented in that kit is unimaginable.

“She said, ‘I’m going now to wash my kids’ hair with shampoo for the first time in six months.’”

“Restoring hope is crucially important now,” says Nader. “Being there and offering caring and helping hands is keeping hope alive for many people who are in need.”

The challenges of operating in a war zone are enormous. DSPR is constantly having to reevaluate and restructure their service delivery.

Since the invasion of Rafah, they made the decision to evacuate their clinic, which had been providing medical support for about 500 patients every day.

Since mid-May, DSPR commenced services through mobile clinics, with teams stitching wounds, treating skin and bone injuries and providing dental support for approximately 300 patients daily. They have also repaired and reopened a damaged clinic site in North Gaza to provide primary health care.

Through the mobile clinics, DSPR distributes high-energy biscuits to patients and children to respond to the extraordinary levels of malnutrition they are witnessing. With widespread starvation observed in many parts of Gaza, DSPR medical staff are concerned about the long-term developmental impacts of malnutrition on children.

“WE WANT YOUR VOICE TO BE STRONGER. FOR JUSTICE. NOT FOR PALESTINIANS, NOT FOR ISRAELIS, NOT FOR CHRISTIANS OR MUSLIMS OR JEWS – WE WANT IT FOR PEACE AND FOR TRUTH AND FOR JUSTICE AND FOR HUMANITY.”

NADER, DSPR



Gaza, NECC-DSPR

As the world waits anxiously for the conflict to end, Nader issues a heartfelt plea for solidarity and raised voices.

“We believe that human beings should be concerned about what’s taking place,” he says.

“Our message is that we want your voice to be stronger. For justice. Not for Palestinians, not for Israelis, not for Christians or Muslims or Jews – we want it for peace and for truth and for justice and for humanity, which is dying in front of cameras.”

We will continue to stand with local organisations to provide lifesaving humanitarian support and call for lasting peace in Gaza because we believe everyone has the right to a safe place to belong.



Positive change happens with people, not to people



Jordan, Khaled Alswidan / Act for Peace

“THE FIRST THING I DID WAS SAVE MONEY AND PAY OFF ALL MY DEBTS, AND NOW I’M DEBT FREE.” ALI* (PICTURED ABOVE) A REFUGEE IN JORDAN, EXPLAINS HOW A LOCALLY LED PROGRAM HAS TRANSFORMED HIS LIFE.

*name changed to protect privacy

The unprecedented global displacement crisis is catastrophic. Over 120 million people are now displaced by conflict, persecution and human rights violations.

According to Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement to the United Nation’s Secretary-General, Robert Piper, the continuing rise of conflict around the world is forcing even more millions of people to flee their homes and making it harder for others, already displaced, to find solutions**. He says the only way forward is to make displaced people more visible and solutions more effective.

As a humanitarian agency working to improve the lives of people who have been displaced – both internally and as refugees – Act for Peace is committed to ensuring the people we support are not just the ‘recipients’ of humanitarian aid but are ‘leading’ the programs designed to help them.

Empowering refugees and people who have been displaced through projects where they take the lead in developing the solutions that impact them, is key to transforming the system from providing short-term relief to long-term solutions.

James Thomson, Act for Peace’s Senior Policy and Protection Advisor, says the only way to ensure that change is sustainable is to work collaboratively with people who are displaced.

“No situation is the same. There’s no one-size fits all solution. We have to work with refugees to

** The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre’s (IDMC) Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024



develop home grown, grass roots approaches that create space for refugees to lead, and co-develop solutions that work for them,” says James.

“We need to take a rights-based approach where we recognise refugees as rights holders, not just objects of charity. We should respect their agency, their dignity, their capacity to contribute, and their right to participate in decisions being made about them.”

According to James, refugees themselves are best placed to assess their own needs. Plus, outcomes are greater when people who have been displaced are empowered to lead their own solutions.

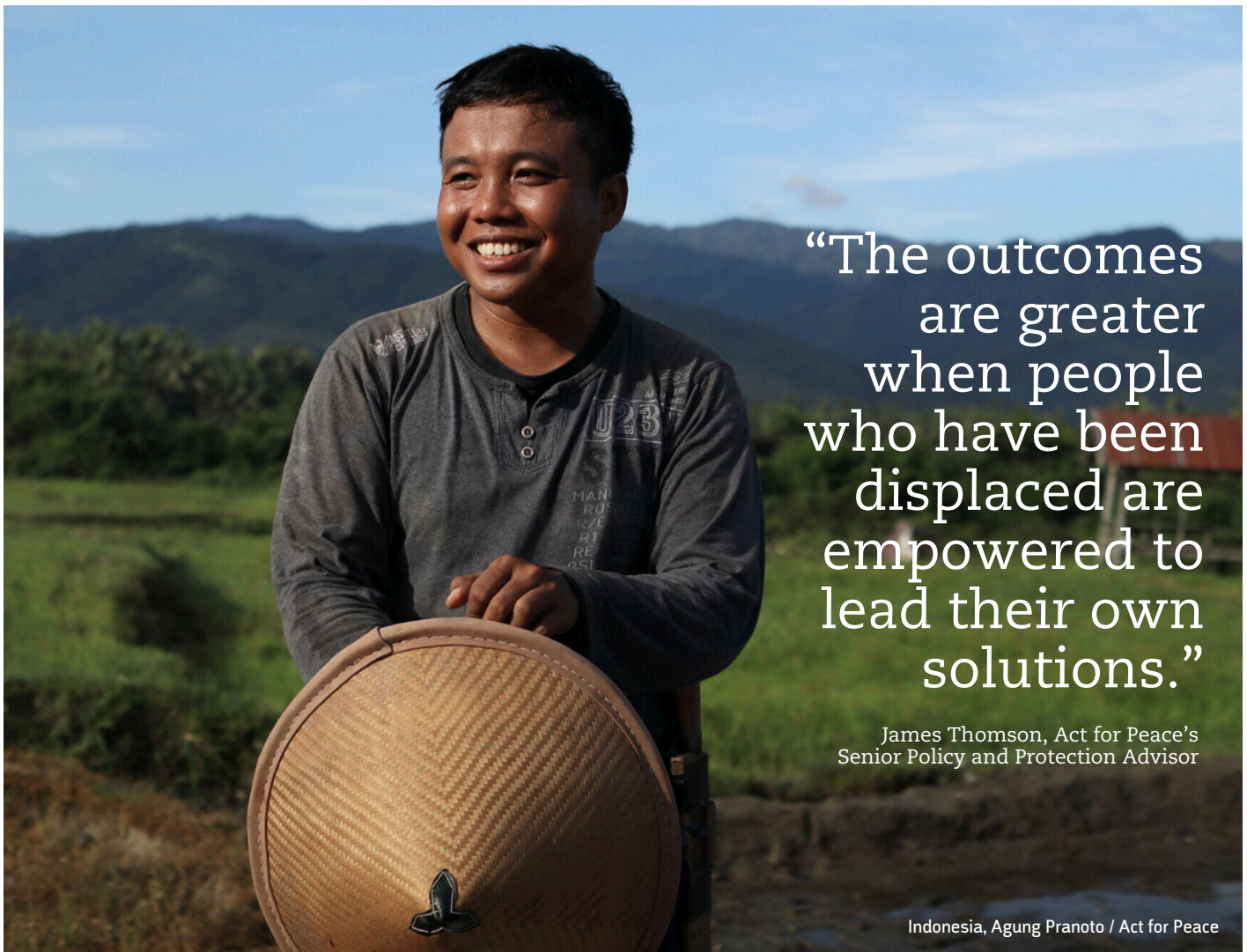
When refugees are actively engaged in helping their own communities, there’s enormous

benefit. Self-esteem improves and community bonds once fractured by displacement are reformed. Displaced communities become better organised and more resilient and able to adapt and address future challenges, James says.

Empowering refugees and helping communities organise and advocate is essential. They become more self-reliant, and solutions are more sustainable, cost efficient and effective.

While a refugee-led approach may not be a quick-fix solution, Act for Peace firmly believes it’s the best way to address the unprecedented displacement crisis our world is facing.

Focusing on long-term solutions where displaced people are empowered to lead the change in their own lives and communities is the way forward.



“The outcomes are greater when people who have been displaced are empowered to lead their own solutions.”

James Thomson, Act for Peace’s Senior Policy and Protection Advisor

Indonesia, Agung Pranoto / Act for Peace



Future proofing communities for climate change

Climate change and displacement are inextricably linked. As global temperatures rise, extreme weather events are increasing in frequency. When disasters like cyclones, floods or droughts hit, poverty and displacement are further intensified.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 8.7 million people were experiencing disaster-induced internal displacement in 2022.

In April 2024, Zimbabwe became the third country in southern Africa to declare a national disaster due to El Niño droughts. Low rainfall is having a catastrophic impact on farm production. Estimates suggest 2.7 million people won't have enough food to eat.

For countries like Zimbabwe that rely heavily on agriculture to produce enough food to eat and income for families and the national economy, creating a more sustainable future is critical.

Act for Peace works with our local partners (Zimbabwe Council of Churches and Christian Care Zimbabwe) alongside communities, to build their resilience to extreme weather events and disasters.

Communities are empowered with climate-resistant farming methods to improve their crop production and access to water sources, even during long-term droughts. This helps ensure they have a reliable food supply and income to provide for their families, even during major climate events.

The projects are locally led with community members involved in every phase of the development process. According to Act for Peace



Zimbabwe, Mikaela O'Neil / Act for Peace

"THE OUTCOMES ARE MORE RELEVANT FOR THE COMMUNITY WHEN IT'S COMMUNITY DRIVEN. THEY FEEL OWNERSHIP OVER IT SO CAN KEEP IT GOING IN THE FUTURE." MIKAELA O'NEIL

International Programs Coordinator, Mikaela O'Neil, this approach is critical to the longevity and success of the programs.

"When the community is empowered to take the lead, the immediate and future outcomes are more impactful," she says.



Celebrating 75 years of giving hope

This year we will celebrate 75 years of giving hope to people forced to flee their homes to safety due to conflict and disaster, through the Christmas Bowl.

In 1949 Rev. Frank Byatt first laid a bowl of remembrance on the Christmas dinner table asking his family to 'share your good dinner with hungry children in other lands'. From this simple act of compassion, the annual Christmas Bowl appeal was born – a much-loved tradition in churches across Australia.

This powerful family tradition, steeped in ecumenism through the National Council of Churches in Australia, has changed the lives of thousands of families around the globe.

For 75 years, families like yours have been giving hope to families who are displaced through the Christmas Bowl. Funds raised are invested in life-changing support and programs around the world.

**PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU;
MY PEACE I GIVE TO YOU.**

JOHN 14:27

In our 75th year, we welcome your family and church community to take part in the annual Christmas Bowl.

Save the date for a *Blessing of the Bowls* celebration online on 17 November at 6.30pm and in person at the St Peters Eastern Hill Church in Melbourne on Sunday 24 November at 2.30pm.

By giving to the Christmas Bowl, you will help provide the peace that comes with having a safe place to belong, for those who need it most.

Stay up to date by subscribing to our enewsletter on our website actforpeace.org.au to receive further details of the celebrations.



From the archives - image lifted from Christmas Bowl poster 1996.



**Christmas
Bowl**

ACTING FOR PEACE TOGETHER

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CONFRONTING INJUSTICE TOGETHER
THROUGH THE actalliance

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James Thomson, Act for Peace's
Senior Policy and Protection Advisor

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