

ACT FOR PEACE

MAGAZINE | SUMMER 2025

TRANSFORMING THE SYSTEM
TO ADDRESS DISPLACEMENT

OUR IMPACT 2023/24

OUR LOCALLY LED APPROACH

MIDDLE EAST
DISPLACEMENT CRISIS

Sowing the seeds of change



LINK
m a g a z i n e



Acting for peace in the world

It takes a global village to help people regain and retain a safe place to belong.

Thank you for being part of our village which helped empower 142,758 people to rebuild their lives in 2023/24!

Thanks to our supporters, partners and institutional donors, we are proud to continue working passionately towards our purpose of creating, together, a world where people uprooted by conflict and disaster have a safe place to belong. Here are some highlights from our Annual Impact Report.

Visit actforpeace.org.au/impactreport to see more.

GOAL 1: SAFETY IN EXILE

People live in safety, with dignity, while displaced

PROGRAMS IN 10 COUNTRIES

- 459 refugees on the Thai-Myanmar border received training in leadership and business to manage their Refugee Camp – a world first refugee led program (see pg 12)
- 16,561 community members received health care services in Pakistan
- Community piped water scheme extended 1,200 metres in Zimbabwe, providing 50 more families with access to safe, clean water

CONTENTS

ACTING FOR PEACE IN THE WORLD	2
Highlights from our Annual Impact Report	
DISPLACEMENT CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST	4
Millions of displaced people cling to hope for peace	
SOWING THE SEEDS OF CHANGE	6
Our strategy to address climate displacement	
FOR THE COMMUNITY, BY THE COMMUNITY	9
Why being locally led is critical to longevity	
BUILDING A SAFER WORLD	12
Creating the foundations for peace and stability	
CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF ACTING FOR PEACE TOGETHER	14
Christmas Bowl turns 75	





GOAL 2: A PLACE TO BELONG

Uprooted people find a permanent place to belong

PROGRAMS IN 4 COUNTRIES

- 613 youth advocates participated in climate network activities in the Philippines
- 1,717 refugees obtained essential civil documents so they can return to their homeland in Sri Lanka
- 100% of returned families received livelihood support and now earn an income in Sri Lanka

GOAL 3: REDUCED DISPLACEMENT

Reducing the number of people forced to flee their homes

PROGRAMS IN 5 COUNTRIES

- 101 displaced families in Tonga were supported to restore their livelihoods
- 711 people received disaster risk management training and accessible support shelters in 8 communities in Vanuatu
- 1,033 people attended climate disaster info sessions in Indonesia
- Climate Displacement Strategy developed





Displacement crisis in the Middle East

Hamas and Israel reached a ceasefire agreement in mid-January, after 15 long months of brutal conflict in Gaza, renewing hopes for peace in the war-torn region.

In the Middle East, the impact of widespread conflict is unfathomable. Families in Gaza have faced constant displacement, the ceasefire in Lebanon is tenuous as violations continue, and the future for millions of displaced Syrians remains uncertain.

As the displacement crisis continued to grow, Act for Peace expanded the Gaza appeal to provide vital support in the broader Middle East Region.

The displacement crisis is overwhelming to comprehend. In Gaza, UNHCR estimates over 1.9 million people have been displaced while Lebanon faces its worst socioeconomic crisis in decades hosting the highest number of refugees per capita worldwide.

The Lebanese Government estimates there are 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

With Bashar al-Assad's regime toppled in Syria, it remains unclear what will happen to the 14 million Syrians forced to flee their homes since the civil war began.

Launching our Middle East Appeal in November, Act for Peace CEO, Elijah Buol OAM, implored generous Australians to act immediately.

"The time to act is now," says Elijah.

"We cannot stand by and watch while hundreds of thousands of people are displaced in Lebanon and almost two million remain displaced in Gaza.

"Families are without a home, without a safe place to belong and they desperately need medical assistance, food, and shelter. They need life-saving support."

According to one of our partners, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) – Department of Services to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR), the needs are enormous, and supplies are low.

"Supporting the appeal means supporting the potential of reducing the pain, reducing the suffering," says DSPR Executive Director, Nader Abu Amsha.

"It's to help the most vulnerable groups, like children, mothers and civilians get some basic needs, like medication and some economic support to help them continue their life. And also, to reduce the potential of deterioration of their psychological status."

There's never been a more important time to act for peace.

Funds raised are deployed through the Act Alliance network of local faith-based organisations in the region to provide emergency assistance.

Gifts to the appeal help equip local organisations in the Middle East to provide life-saving emergency assistance for people who have been forced to flee their homes, including the following:

- emergency medical services, primary healthcare and mental health support
- food, shelter, hygiene and emergency cash support

To help local organisations in the Middle East respond to this humanitarian crisis, please scan the QR code and give to our Emergency Appeal.



actforpeace.org.au/middle-east-appeal

“It’s really an unbearable situation people are going through.

Our goal is to help reduce the pain of the people there by offering whatever services we can.”

– DSPR Executive Director, Nader Abu Amsha

Mohammed Abed / Act for Peace



A child amid the rubble of a damaged building following strikes on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.



Protecting communities from climate change

Climate change is having a catastrophic impact on communities around the world who are forced to flee their homes with the World Bank predicting 49 million people. In East Asia and the Pacific predicted to be displaced due to climate impacts by 2050.

Act for Peace designed a strategy to address the growing issue of climate displacement.

According to the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, climate related disasters triggered more than half of new reported displacements in 2022 60% of refugees and displaced people now live in countries that are among the most vulnerable to climate change.

People like Eko, a farmer in Indonesia who has experienced multiple flood disasters and has seen his harvest decrease as the changing climate impacts soil density.

60% of refugees and displaced people now live in countries that are among the most vulnerable to climate change.

“What I wish is [to know] how to adapt to the climate. The harvest back in my parents’ time could be extraordinary, but in my era with climate change, the texture of the soil gets denser, and our income decreases,” says Eko.

If farmers like Eko aren’t equipped to adapt to the changing climate, they face the very real risk of becoming displaced.

Rising sea levels are submerging villages, shifting global rainfall patterns are increasing wet seasons in some regions while lengthening



Act for Peace and Tonga National Council of Churches (TNCC) staff working in solidarity to ensure no one is left behind when it comes to climate displacement.

“Back in the old days, there was no such climate change issue. The farmers still had a lot of income.” – Eko

Agung Pranoto / Act for Peace



For farmers like Eko in Indonesia to continue farming their ancestral lands, they must learn new ways to adapt to the changing climate.



droughts in others, and an increase in extreme weather events like wildfires and flooding all have the same outcome: forcing more people to flee their homes.

Relocation can be traumatic, and communities facing climate displacement often turn to spiritual leaders and traditional governance systems for guidance and support. Relocation has both positive and negative impacts on people's livelihoods and wellbeing with increased access to services but loss of access to traditional land and water.

In many regions where Act for Peace works, climate change is having a disastrous impact on families and communities:

- In Tonga, hundreds of people were displaced after a volcanic eruption and tsunami forced them to flee their homes and relocate.
- At the end of 2024, the Philippines was hit with an onslaught of tropical cyclones – with four consecutive natural disasters hitting the Pacific Island region with a deluge of rain, causing widespread flooding, landslides and power outages.
- In Indonesia in the urban region of Makassar, South Sulawesi, highly vulnerable communities are frequently displaced by climate-driven events like flooding.

Act for Peace works alongside local partners to go beyond providing emergency relief, to help communities prepare, respond and recover from disasters. An inclusive, long-term approach ensures people with disabilities and other vulnerable community members are supported in disasters. Modern farming methods like climate-resistant crops and providing access to alternative sources of income empower people to provide for their families.

We support our partners to provide education and capacity-building for churches and ecumenical networks so they can lead the change locally.

Through a competitive tender process, Act for Peace engaged the Humanitarian Advisory Group to lead the development of a climate displacement strategy.



Vina Marjes Salazar / Act for Peace

For traditional farmers like Teodora* in the Philippines, the changing climate impacts rice production, and repeated tropical cyclones threaten the community every year.

This involved hearing directly from communities with lived experience of climate displacement in Fiji, as well as leading consultations with donors and our long-standing funders.

The result is a clear strategy and planning tool to support practical needs and gaps in the sector. The new Climate Displacement Strategy 2024-2030 is a key tool to guide priorities for programming and policy support.

Act for Peace is dedicated to continuing to stand with our partners and the communities they serve to address climate displacement and ensure everyone has a safe place to belong.



For the community, by the community

With almost 123 million people forcibly displaced by conflict and violence around the world (OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2025), a unified approach to the global displacement crisis is desperately needed.

Act for Peace is committed to standing with people displaced by conflict and disaster because we wholeheartedly believe that together, we are stronger. We passionately build solidarity through long term partnerships and a locally led approach.

We know creating lasting positive change happens with people, not to people, so we work side-by-side with communities to shape solutions together – driven for the community, by the community.

Content Lead, Aimée Keay, caught up with Act for Peace International Partnerships and Programs Manager, Aletia Dundas, to discuss why being locally led is so important.

Q What does it mean to be “locally led”?

To me, it means that our partners and the people they serve set their own agendas and guide solutions. They decide the direction of projects and are the leaders in planning and carrying out project activities, monitoring ongoing progress and evaluating impact.

For our partners, the idea is that people affected by displacement are at the centre of decision making and actions to address displacement.



Genaye Eshetu / Act for Peace

Alaa Al Salaiti, DSPR Program Manager, Jordan, (far right) travelled to Ethiopia last year to share key learnings from his experience implementing the Graduation Approach pilot as the DICAC Ethiopia team was implementing a similar program.



Q Why is being locally led so important?

Our partners know their situation best.

We need to trust in their leadership because they know their context and they are best placed to respond.

If our partners and those they seek to serve are active participants and leaders in their own journey, then the program they lead is more likely to succeed.

In the case of protracted refugee situations, refugee led initiatives provide the best solutions to problems. Act for Peace strives for meaningful participation of refugees.

The Walking the Talk program works in solidarity with partners to back displaced people in our engagement with policy makers.

Q What's so special about Walking the Talk in terms of locally led partnerships?

Walking the Talk (WtT) is a global project that involves all our partners in activities that challenge power dynamics and recognise the strengths of people affected by displacement.

We've facilitated mutual learning sessions for us and our partners in transformative safeguarding, disability inclusion and accountability to affected populations.

We also facilitated cross learning between two partners in Ethiopia and Jordan in the Graduation out of Poverty approach.

We've enabled our partner in Bangladesh to tell their story of success in a pilot project helping communities to anticipate emergencies at the Regional Humanitarian Partnership Week (RHPW) in Bangkok on 11th December 2024.

We've supported several partners to prepare funding proposals where they are the lead organisation, and we've co-produced research

together with refugee led networks.

WtT offers our partner organisations opportunities to grow outside of their current programs. WtT enables cross learning, strengthening networks and opportunities to pilot innovative approaches.

Partners have spoken about the impact of these opportunities and how they influence their work going forward.

As an anonymous participant on the WtT learning event, said "reflection and learning events are often a good way to allow an organisation or individual to monitor progress, adjust goals, and evaluate outcomes.

Also, by reflecting on project process, one can enhance critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills, as well as your self-awareness and confidence."

Each partner organisation is unique and can participate in different ways through WtT to enhance their own organisational knowledge bank and broaden their experience, consolidating their own expertise to leverage into the future.

Q Act for Peace works in solidarity with our partners. How does Walking the Talk achieve this?

WtT works in solidarity with partners to back displaced people in our engagement with policy makers.

Being in solidarity also means recognising our partners' leadership and strengths and stepping back so that they can take the floor and speak about their experiences.

The RHPW is a good example of this because the whole event is organised by one of our partners and attended by humanitarian actors from Asia and the Pacific.

Our other partners who we supported to attend have the opportunity to network, hear about the experiences of others in similar situations, and learn about innovative models being piloted in the region.



Q What's your hope for the future of this program and the partnerships involved?

We need to recognise our partners' existing capacity and provide opportunities for those strengths to shine.

My hope is that in the future the model of working will be more reciprocal and mutual. I imagine that there will be more learning between partners.

For example, our partner in Pakistan, CWSA has offered to provide accountability to affected populations and safeguarding training to our other partners. Our partner in Bangladesh, Christian Aid, has already provided advice to our

partner in the Philippines, NCCP, on Anticipatory Action, and our partner in Jordan, DSPR, was able to share insights about the Graduation Approach with our partner in Ethiopia, DICAC.

In providing feedback on the learning experience, one of the DICAC staff said, "The practical experience you shared with us is inspiring the Tesfa team for future commitment and implementation."

People affected by displacement are at the centre of decision making and actions to address displacement.



Aletia Dundas (third from left) with partner staff from Christian Aid, Bangladesh at the Regional Humanitarian Partnership Week (RHPW) in Bangkok in December 2024.



Building a safer and peaceful world

We hear from our Senior Policy & Protection Advisor, James Thomson, who is at the forefront of confronting the injustice that fuels displacement. He shares what acting for peace in the world looks like.

Feeling like the world's about to end? Paralysed by 'doom scrolling' on social media? Too scared to book an overseas trip?

Beyond the litany of daily horror – from the carnage in Gaza to the ongoing crisis in Myanmar – Act for Peace is doing just that, building a safer world, for all of us. And we've taken aim: resolving the global displacement crisis – taking action to create the foundations for peace and stability.

Founded on the belief we can act together for peace, we see a world of opportunity to create positive change, and in 2024 we've been really busy.

While the world's attention is elsewhere, closer to home, Myanmar's democratic forces and armed opposition groups have liberated nearly half of their country from Myanmar's despotic military junta, which has led a 70-year reign of terror.

Behind the scenes, we've been lobbying hard to ensure the government provide more aid for the two million displaced in liberated areas, and support for good governance as these new groups build more democratic government structures.

In India and Sri Lanka, we're backing a world first: our local partner, a refugee-run organisation who we've helped develop since 1984, has been



Delivering Community Based Protection Training for field staff from our partner organisation, The Border Consortium (TBC) working in refugee camps on the Thai-Myanmar border.



Act for Peace CEO, Elijah Buol OAM (left) joined other humanitarian agency leaders in Canberra to meet government representatives to campaign for a Safer World For All.

so successful, it's now running its own refugee return and reintegration program, enabling thousands of refugees to return home in safety and with dignity.

With our support to step up their advocacy, we are helping to develop a policy for the newly elected government to help reintegrate returning refugees after decades of being stuck in refugee camps in India. Now that's restorative justice!

At home, we've successfully lobbied the Australian government to step up its efforts to resolve the global displacement crisis, with Australia prioritising displacement in both its new International Development Policy and its new Humanitarian Policy.

This year, we're calling for Australia to appoint an Ambassador for Global Displacement to help resolve the protracted refugee crisis and prevent further displacement.

We've also gathered together a global coalition to push for recognition of refugees' rights to participate in decisions and projects that affect their lives. Working with refugee leaders, we're supporting the development of a refugee Declaration on the Right to Participate, and then asking the international community to recognise that right in international law.

And we're not alone. We're joined by thousands of supporters partnering with us to create a Safer World and a global network of like-minded organisations as part of the ACT Alliance.

This year, we'll continue to help churches stay and deliver vital aid in Gaza, support Palestinian and Syrian refugees in Jordan break out of poverty and become self-sufficient, help our Pacific neighbours prepare for and respond to more frequent and intense climate-driven disasters.

We've successfully lobbied the Australian government to step up its efforts to resolve the global displacement crisis, with Australia prioritising displacement in both its new International Development Policy and its new Humanitarian Policy.



Celebrating 75 years of acting for peace together



2024 was a momentous year for Act for Peace's defining, annual appeal with the Christmas Bowl celebrating its 75th anniversary.

Act for Peace staff, including CEO Elijah Buol OAM, as well as long-term supporters and church members united at Pitt Street Uniting Church in Sydney and St Peter's Eastern Hill in Melbourne at special services to launch and reflect on the legacy of the Christmas Bowl.

For 75 years, church communities have been uniting through the Christmas Bowl to give hope to people who are displaced around the world.

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.

The Christmas Bowl legacy runs deep – in families, across generations, cultures, denominations and nations – countless lives have been changed and bridges of solidarity built. Since 1949, Australians have raised over \$115,000,000 to provide life changing support to families who are displaced.

Brian and Jillian Polkinghorne have been supporting the Christmas Bowl since 1965.

"We have so many blessings, and we see the injustices. We see, the oppression, we see the unfairness of it all, and we just feel that we have to respond."

From supporting refugees after World War II, to caring for families affected by famine in Ethiopia in the 1980s, and more recently, supporting people fleeing war-torn Ukraine – the church community has made an incredible difference in the world through the Christmas Bowl.

Act for Peace CEO, Elijah Buol OAM shared a message of hope at Pitt Street Uniting Church in Sydney.

"That's the message today, that for those who are displaced, in Gaza, in Myanmar, the message is, we can give them that hope."

Thank you for acting for peace in the world during 75 years of the Christmas Bowl.

If you would like to give to this appeal, scan the QR code or visit: christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au



Act for Peace CEO, Elijah Buol, sharing at the launch of the Christmas Bowl at Pitt Street Uniting Church in Sydney.



VANUATU EARTHQUAKE EMERGENCY

A magnitude 7.3 earthquake struck Vanuatu on Tuesday, December 17, 2024, causing widespread devastation. Act for Peace immediately launched an emergency appeal to support our Pacific neighbours, to help provide humanitarian assistance for those impacted by the disaster.

All gifts directly support local organisations in Vanuatu, including our partner Vanuatu Christian Council, (VCC) to provide critical life-saving emergency supplies including food, water and shelter and to help locals rebuild their lives in the aftermath of the disaster.

If you would like to give to this appeal, scan the QR code or visit actforpeace.org.au/vanuatu



Rescue workers are seen at the site of a collapsed building in Port Vila.



RATION CHALLENGE

As part of Refugee Week, young Australians will take part in the Ration Challenge for Schools and Youth Groups.

In June 2025, young people can participate in this immersive learning experience through their school or youth group, getting sponsored to eat the same rations as a refugee in Jordan for three days. Funds raised will help provide emergency food, healthcare, and essential support for refugees and communities uprooted by conflict and disaster. Visit these websites to find out more:

schools.rationchallenge.org.au
church.rationchallenge.org.au



LEAVE A GIFT IN YOUR WILL

Leaving a gift in your Will provides a special opportunity for people to leave a legacy long into the future.

A legacy of generosity and hope where people displaced by conflict or disaster have a safe place to belong.

After ensuring your loved ones are taken care of, you can continue to support a mission you care deeply about.

Together, we can continue to make a life-changing difference to people experiencing displacement long into the future.

Visit our website to find out more about the ways you can choose to leave a gift in your Will to help us create more long term, sustainable impact in the lives of people experiencing displacement around the world.

If you would like to leave a gift in your Will, scan the QR code or visit actforpeace.org.au/take-action/give/leave-a-gift-in-your-will



Cover image: In Indonesia, our long-term partnership with Church World Service Indonesia is helping to address climate displacement.

ACT FOR PEACE

CONFRONTING INJUSTICE TOGETHER
THROUGH THE **actalliance**

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