



# **Heart for Humanity**

## **Strategy 2026–2030**



**Caritas**  
Danmark

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# Heart for Humanity

**“ ... if love reigns in our heart, we become, in a complete and luminous way, the persons we are meant to be, for every human being is created above all else for love. In the deepest fibre of our being, we were made to love and to be loved**

/ Pope Francis, *Dilexit nos*, 2024

**“ This is the hour for love! The heart of the gospel is the love of God that makes us brothers and sisters. With my predecessor Leo XIII, we can ask ourselves today: If this criterion “were to prevail in the world, would not every conflict cease and peace return?”**

/ Pope Leo XIV, 2025, with reference to Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*

Today, humanity is on the move more than ever before. An unprecedented number of people are fleeing their homes, and migration continues to rise steadily. This trend is driven by various factors, including armed conflicts, climate change, poverty, and the pursuit of better economic opportunities abroad.

We see the world marked by violence, conflicts, polarization, and the rise of populism. These trends manifest in different ways across the regions where Caritas Denmark is active. We are observing significant cuts in humanitarian and development aid from the Global North, alongside growing challenges to international humanitarian law despite ongoing crises. Additionally, shifts in global power dynamics are occurring, while technological advancements amplify divisive narratives—often fueling hostile perceptions and the spread of misinformation.

On Europe's eastern borders, we see escalating tensions, and the war in Ukraine has now lasted over three years. The Middle East continues to suffer from war and destruction. In the Sahel, military governments are pursuing new agendas in the fight against terrorism, while large parts of the population have been displaced. The conflicts in South Sudan and DR Congo have led to a large number of people fleeing to an already strained Uganda. In Southeast Asia, Myanmar is suffering from civil war, and Bangladesh is still hosting more than one million Rohingya refugees who have no prospect of returning home anytime soon. It is also a region that is particularly hard hit by climate change and natural disasters. These are all developments that show how powerless the world community is in the face of disasters, and not least how wars and humanitarian crises destabilise entire regions and affect the rest of the world. It reminds us of how connected we are as humanity.

It is on this basis the present strategy is published. *Heart for Humanity* is Caritas Denmark's

overall strategy for the period 2026–2030. The strategy is published 20 years after Benedict XVI's *Deus caritas est* (God is love, 2005) and builds on the previous strategy *One Human Family, One Common Home*, which ran from 2022 to 2025 and was inspired by the recently deceased Pope Francis' encyclicals *Laudato si'* (Praise be to you, 2015) and *Fratelli tutti* (All brothers, 2020). *Heart for Humanity*, like the previous strategy, is rooted in respect for the inalienable dignity of each human being and in care for the human family and our common home, the Earth. In addition, inspired by Pope Francis' most recent encyclical, *Dilexit nos* (He loved us, 2024), the strategy is devoted to the reflection and compassion that should always be present in the service of one's neighbour. The human person is far more than a bearer of intelligence and reason. The human person embodies spiritual, emotional, creative, and affective dimensions that are often underestimated, neglected, or suppressed in today's world. It is the heart that integrates all these dimensions.

*Heart for Humanity* has been created in a participatory process between the board, staff, volunteers, partners and those we serve, and reflects the strategic direction of Caritas Internationalis and Caritas Europe.

Approved by Caritas Denmark's Board on 22 May 2025,

Stine Rørbæk Møller  
Chairperson

Maria Krabbe Hammershøj  
Secretary General

**Heart for Humanity**  
Caritas Denmark's strategy  
for the period 2026–2030

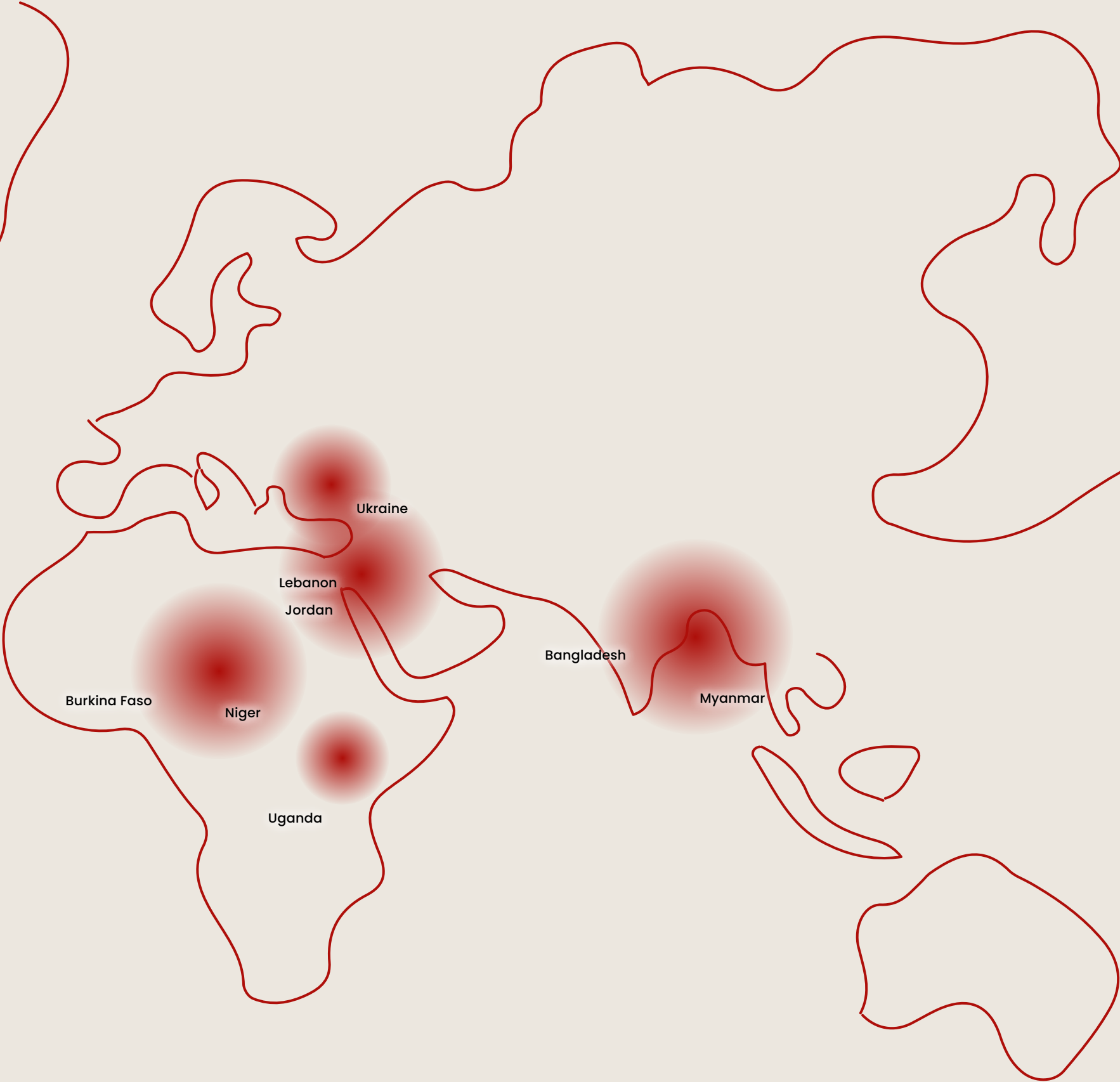
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# Caritas Denmark as part of the Church and the Caritas Network Globally

**“ In difficult times we are not left alone, and we feel Caritas Denmark’s love and care**

/ Caritas Denmark’s Partnership Evaluation, 2024



Caritas Denmark is part of Caritas Internationalis, the Catholic Church’s worldwide network for social and humanitarian work, whose mission is tied to the practice of charity and the pursuit of the common good. Caritas means love, and across the network we seek to contribute to a world based on love, peace and justice. As part of the network, we respond to emerging disasters, support the world’s poor, provide social services, speak out against the causes of poverty and violence, and promote integrated human development. This is based on a deep care for the Earth as a gift from God, which we are obliged to take care of so that we can pass it on to future generations.

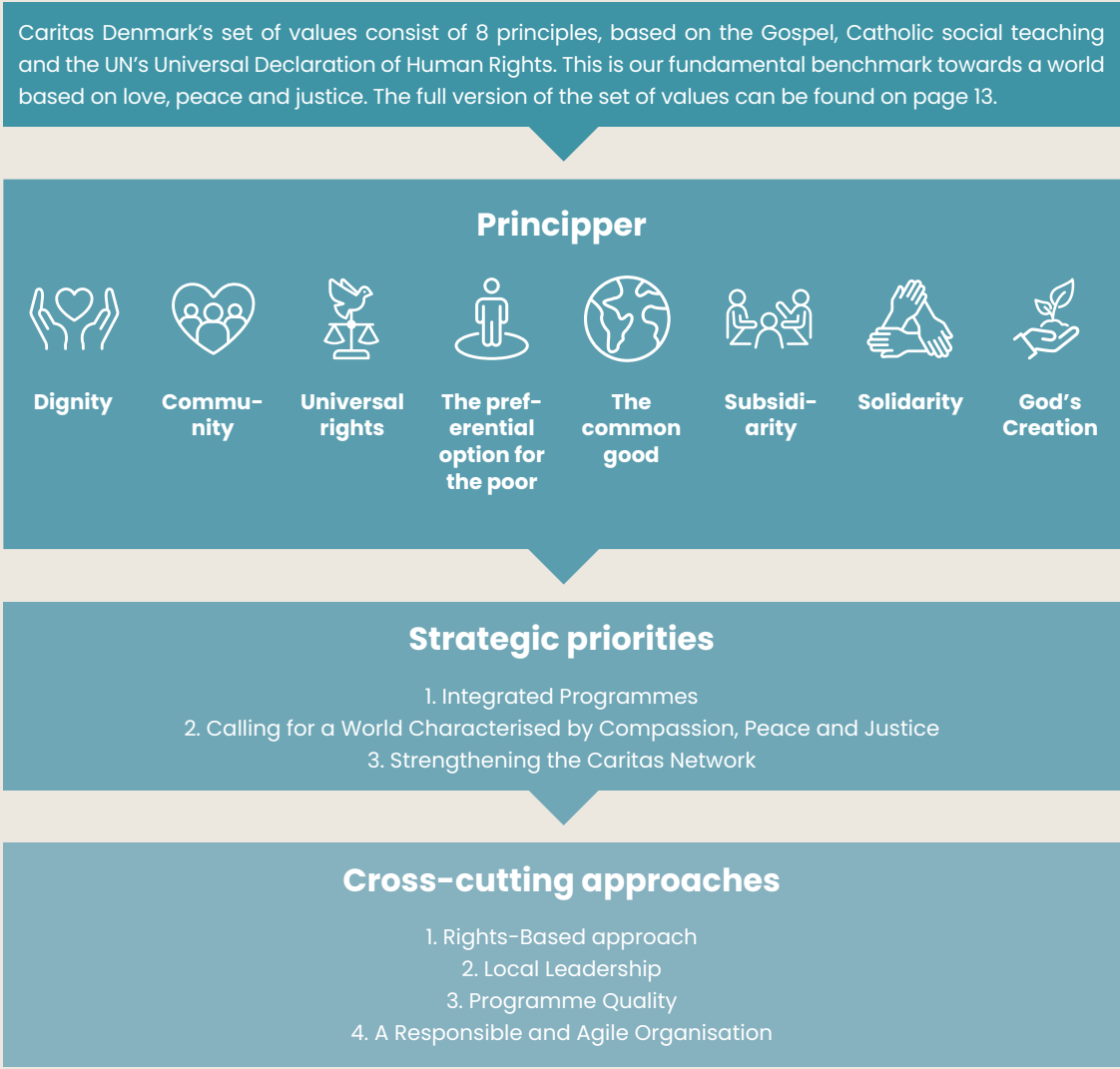
As the world’s second largest humanitarian network, with over 162 member organisations present in almost every country, Caritas is locally rooted in the structures of the Catholic Church, contributing to stability in communities worldwide. The Catholic Church operates more than 224,000 kindergartens and schools worldwide for almost 62 million children and young people, as well as more than 5,000 hospitals. In addition, there are orphanages, homes for people with disabilities, rehabilitation centres and other institutions. This means that when

a crisis strikes, the church and the Caritas network is already present locally. Together with our partners, and volunteers, we are able to mobilise aid as soon as a crisis occurs, to reach places that are otherwise difficult to access for humanitarian organisations, as well as to contribute to locally rooted peace and reconciliation efforts.

We believe that the only way to create sustainable change is to involve local communities and start from existing resources. The Catholic parishes in Denmark are actively involved in creating engagement and change locally. Caritas must always be close to the people we serve. Likewise, we believe that it is our obligation, in Denmark and through our partners, to contribute to a diverse civil society, where we as a faith-based organisation can contribute with an insight and understanding of faith as a central element in many societies around the world. We are happy to seek knowledge and enter collaborations and consortia far and wide with other actors, also outside the Caritas network, when relevant to create the best results and ensure learning.

“Caritas meets people with a comprehensive offer that helps them on their way with support for often more than one problem

/ Caritas Denmark user volunteer in the Migrant House, 2025



# Strategic Priorities for Our Work in Denmark and Around the World

Based on our core principles, Caritas Denmark will focus on three overarching strategic priorities during this strategy period:

## 1. Integrated Programmes

Caritas Denmark will continue to prioritise integrated programming to provide the flexibility necessary to support vulnerable communities effectively. Our goal is to help these communities become more resilient, capable of preparing for and recovering from crises, and able to sustain themselves in conditions that promote equality, peace, and environmental regeneration.

In our international work with local partners, we operate within the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus. This means that all our programmes integrate humanitarian assistance, development efforts, and peacebuilding to varying degrees, depending on how crises evolve and community needs change over time. We work to reduce risk, save lives, and rebuild communities. We support long-term sustainable human development, grounded in the belief that the most disadvantaged must have the opportunity to live in peace and dignity. We also remain committed to environmental stewardship, and in this strategy period, we will strengthen systems to integrate climate considerations across all programmes.

As a faith-based organisation, Caritas Denmark has a unique responsibility to promote peace

and social cohesion in local communities. We will continue to weave this perspective into our work.

We actively promote coordination, coherence, and complementarity with other stakeholders across humanitarian and development sectors. This applies to all thematic areas – including health, nutrition, agriculture, livelihoods, education, protection, and advocacy – ensuring that our interventions are always rooted in the actual needs of individuals, as identified by our local partners. Each programme is designed collaboratively by Caritas Denmark and our partners and their communities to best address present and future local needs.

In Denmark, our commitment to integrated programming translates into a holistic approach in everything we do. Grounded in respect for the individual, our model ensures that when someone comes to Caritas with a specific challenge, they are met by a staff member or volunteer who responds with empathy and curiosity – seeking to understand the whole person. Based on this understanding, we can offer a wide range of services that empower individuals to reach their full potential.

This integrated approach also operates at a systems level, where we advocate for improved coordination across sectors and organisations to deliver cohesive and responsive services. We are also working to ensure that our services are accessible throughout Denmark and to gener-



**“ Caritas takes you seriously and meets you openly. They don’t just give you advice when you’re there – they follow the case through to the end**

/ Caritas Denmark user volunteer in the Migrant House, 2025

ate synergy across our three program areas: community, counselling, and health. In doing so, we can engage both professionals and volunteers to reach out to vulnerable people and help them build a life in dignity.

## 2. Calling for a World Characterised by Compassion, Peace, and Justice

Caritas Denmark envisions a world where the voices of the poor are heard and where governments and institutions are just, accountable, and inclusive — empowering even the most marginalised communities to influence the systems and decisions that shape their lives. We are therefore committed to promoting a world founded on compassion, peace, and justice, where every person’s dignity is respected, and where the principles of community and responsibility for the vulnerable guide our collective actions. We recognise Creation as a common good to be protected for future generations.

Together with our partners, the communities we serve, the Caritas network, our donors, volunteers, and the broader civil society in Denmark, we will inform, influence, and engage people to drive change — both individually and at the policy level.

Caritas Denmark will continue working to ensure integrity and transparency in our communication and fundraising efforts, especially when

advocating for peace and reconciliation. We remain steadfast in our belief that every person has inherent value and a role to play in creating a fairer and more sustainable world. Our work is rooted in hope.

We also strive to influence decision-makers to promote systemic and structural change at local, national, and global levels — advancing a more peaceful, just, and compassionate world. A key focus will be on holding duty bearers accountable when conditions and practices contradict our core principles.

In Denmark, one of our central advocacy areas is the rights of labour migrants. Labour migration is a major driver of growth and development in Danish society, particularly in sectors like construction, industry, and services. We believe this economic benefit must be matched by a corresponding social responsibility — ensuring that migrant workers have access to support, fair wages, and decent working conditions.

Globally, we remain strong advocates for local leadership and will continue advocating for systemic reform within the humanitarian sector. We do this through our engagement in key networks, including Charter4Change and the Caritas Internationalis network, to help shift power and decision-making from donors and organisations in the Global North to communities and organisations in the Global South.

Caritas Denmark is committed to engaging our communities, volunteers, donors, and partners in

Denmark — empowering them to become strong advocates for the world’s poorest while standing behind our shared mission. Through diverse communication strategies, we aim to reach new audiences, including those who may not typically engage with development or humanitarian work. We will also deepen our engagement with Catholic schools and parishes with whom we share common values.

## 3. Strengthening the Caritas Network

Caritas Denmark will place particular emphasis on strengthening the Caritas network, both nationally and globally, with the goal of enhancing the autonomy of partner organisations through mobilisation, coordination, communication, representation, and capacity development. We aim to contribute to a global network led by strong local organisations, where staff and volunteers make decisions and implement solutions as close as possible to those affected. In doing so, Caritas is best positioned to serve the most vulnerable and to advance to a more peaceful and just world. This commitment aligns with our principle of subsidiarity — the belief that locally rooted organisations are best placed to create lasting, socially just change in their communities.

In our international projects and partnerships, Caritas Denmark will continue to promote high standards of professionalism and collaboration across the Caritas network. We do this by ac-

tively listening to the needs and priorities of local communities and partners and by supporting them with relevant capacity and organisational development. This work is guided by the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) and the Caritas Internationalis Management Standards (CIMS). Our aim is to support partners in becoming more autonomous, adaptable, and resilient in an increasingly complex world, enabling them to respond effectively and sustainably to challenges. During this strategic period, we will place a particular focus on strengthening partner capacity in key areas such as fundraising, organisational development, leadership, and management where relevant to the local context.

Caritas Denmark will continue to be an active and engaged member of Caritas Internationalis, supporting the growth and coordination of the network across Europe and in the regions where our partners operate. By working together, we ensure that Caritas organisations worldwide act in solidarity and remain capable of delivering high-quality work. In the area of communication and public engagement, we will tailor our strategies for both national and international audiences. We will also participate in joint campaigns across the global Caritas network, contributing to a united voice that advocates for the world’s poorest and most marginalised.

Internally, Caritas Denmark remains committed to efficiency, accountability, and high quality in all areas of our work. These priorities are further detailed under our cross-cutting approach number 4. A Responsible and Agile Organisation.



# Cross-Cutting Approaches



**“The emphasis on localisation, both in terms of leadership and decision-making, has empowered us to take ownership of our programs, leading to more contextually relevant and sustainable interventions**

/ Caritas Denmark’s Partnership Evaluation, 2024

At Caritas Denmark, four cross-cutting approaches underpin all aspects of our work — including our strategic priorities. These approaches are fundamental to how we operate, engage with communities and partners, and measure our impact. We encourage all staff, partners, and volunteers to understand and embrace these approaches to ensure we deliver high-quality, compassionate, and effective support.

## 1. Rights-Based Approach

Our work is grounded in a human rights-based framework and the principle of “Leaving No One Behind.” We believe that just and sustainable development is possible when entire communities are lifted but with particular attention to the needs and rights of the most vulnerable.

We adhere to the humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality, and neutrality, and are committed to safe and dignified programming. This includes ensuring meaningful participation, non-discrimination, accountability,

and transparency in all our programmes. We listen to the people we serve and aim to involve them actively in shaping responses that affect their lives.

Our primary target groups include the most vulnerable and those facing crises, displacement, and migration, especially women, children, and youth — who are often disproportionately impacted. We work to identify and address context-specific vulnerabilities and inequalities but also resources related to gender, age, ethnicity, and other factors.

In Denmark, our focus is on labour migrants, a group that often falls into the gaps in the welfare system. While many arrive with resources and potential, they frequently lack the social networks and financial resilience needed to navigate challenges they meet. We also support other vulnerable individuals in Denmark to preserve dignity by offering inclusive services — such as access to communities, free multilingual counselling, and healthcare for those unable to access the system independently.

## 2. Local Leadership

Caritas Denmark is committed to local leadership — not only in programme delivery but as a broader contribution to building strong, diverse civil societies and capable Caritas member organisations. This is in line with our strategic priority number 3. Strengthening the Caritas network.

Rooted in the principle of subsidiarity, we believe that decisions should be made as close to affected communities as possible. We actively involve vulnerable groups — including women and youth — and support partners to lead initiatives that reflect their local realities.

We promote capacity development, strategic partnership building, and regular partnership dialogues to jointly define goals and strengthen collaboration. We also allocate specific budget lines for capacity strengthening and set clear targets for financial transfers to partners. In Caritas Denmark, local leadership also means a holistic, people-centered approach, where everyone’s needs and strengths are recognised, and services are delivered with dignity and empathy.

Our commitment to local leadership includes a willingness to listen deeply, even when perspectives differ. This is essential to shifting power within the global development and humanitarian system and to holding ourselves accountable within that same system.

## 3. Programme Quality

We see quality as the ability to balance dignity with efficiency — ensuring that vulnerable people receive the best possible support while responsibly managing donor and contributor resources.

We maintain a strong focus on value for money, results-based management, and transparent documentation of our impact. Quality also means being responsive: we listen to partners and communities, and ensure robust monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation systems are in place. This enables us to share meaningful stories of how our work is making a difference.

We actively seek innovation and cross-sector collaboration, drawing on complementary

**“CDK is a reflective organisation, constantly striving to improve quality and accountability to its partners and communities**

/ 2025 Audit report, HQAI (Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative)

partnerships with the private sector, academia, and other like-minded organisations to improve learning, quality and practice.

Caritas Denmark adheres to a range of policies and standards to safeguard quality and detect irregularities including Ethics and Anti-corruption policies, Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, CIMS and CHS.

We support partners in aligning with CIMS and CHS and continuously improve our own systems accordingly. In this strategy period, we will also systematically implement CIMS across our work in Denmark. We view preventive measures as an integral part of operating as a responsible organisation, ensuring that we have taken the necessary measures to protect those who access our services and are part of our programmes. We draw on experience from our international work, which we apply as our work in Denmark expand. In our international work, we are fully CHS certified. Going forward, we will ensure compliance with new requirements related to climate and environmental sustainability.

#### 4. A responsible and Agile Organisation

We will continue to work to ensure that Caritas Denmark remains a responsible and agile organisation with skilled and committed staff and relevant systems in place. This will enable us to continue working in a responsible, professional and compassionate manner in close, respectful collaboration with the people we serve.

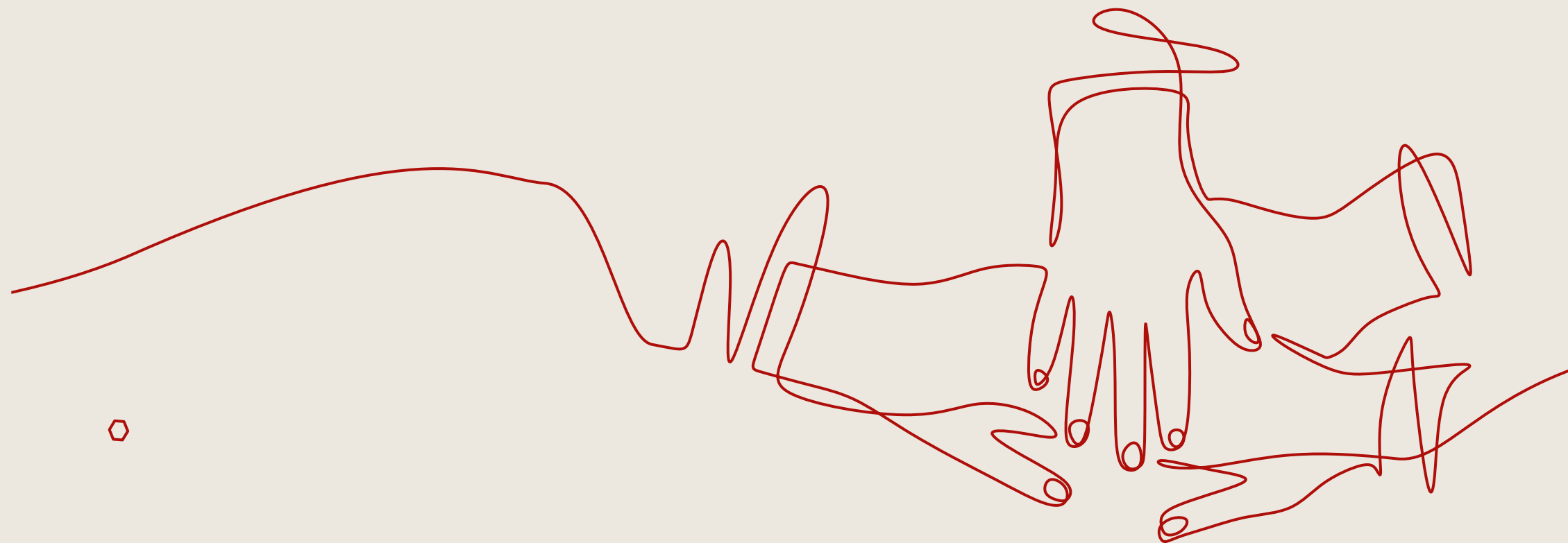
During this strategy period, we will have a special focus on advancing the digitalisation of our procedures and systems. This will especially apply to digital solutions in the areas of fundraising, finance and administration in the coming years. It is important that we make use of available tools to ensure quality, efficiency and proper documentation of our work.

To ensure a sustainable and stable organisational economy and that we remain well-prepared for the future, Caritas Denmark will continue to work towards securing sustainable and diversified funding, where we work with several different donors to safeguard our independ-

ence from particular interests. Furthermore, we will contribute to sustainable economic development going hand in hand with global climate responsibility. In addition, we will continue to ensure that our financial reporting is transparent, to maintain fixed percentage-based targets for administration costs and transfers to our work in the programme countries and ensure requirements for free equity.

Caritas Denmark will continue to be a learning organisation that develops by listening, reflecting and embracing the diversity among staff, partners and the people we serve. Our working environment must continue to be inclusive and attractive. This means, among other things, that we will have room for flexibility, initiative, involvement and cross-departmental exchange. We lead through values such as solidarity, respect for the individual, involvement of the community, and believe that tasks are solved and decisions are best made as close to the affected staff and volunteers as possible. Caritas Denmark will continue to ensure that our staff are committed, professionally highly competent, continually acquire relevant knowledge, actively participate in relevant networks

and contribute with respect and humanity in their interaction with others. We will also work purposefully to make greater use of the interdisciplinary resources available in our network in the future to be able to address complex challenges in a changing world – one in which Caritas Denmark must always have a heart for humanity.



# Caritas Denmark Set of Values



## THE INALIENABLE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

**Caritas believes that all human beings are unique and created in the image of God. Therefore, all human beings are of equal value regardless of who they are, what they believe in, and what situation they find themselves in.**

God has created all things but only man is created in the image of God. This means that every human person is unique and irreplaceable. It also means that all human beings are of equal value regardless of who they are, what they believe in and what situation they find themselves in. This applies to the human person's entire life from conception to a natural death. The individual human being's value is independent of its abilities and therefore inalienable. Severe illness, age, lack of education, or disabilities thus in no way reduce the person's value or dignity.

Being created in the image of God also means that understanding who man is can only be grasped if we start with God. There is only one God, but God is neither single nor solitary. God is Triune. God is a community of three persons: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Human beings are therefore not just created as individuals but as persons called to form a community. The foundation of this community is the relationship between man and woman and the relationship between the human person and God. From this foundation the human community is meant to grow to include all human beings.

If you want to understand the individual person and promote his or her development, you must therefore always take its relationships with other human beings and with God into consideration. Although the human person is always part of a community, it is the individual human being's needs and development that Caritas has as its starting point. The reason for this is that the individual human being must never be involuntarily secondary to a group's or society's needs and never be reduced to a means in a relief effort or in a development process. This

does not mean that aid should be granted to individuals. On the contrary, the best results are often achieved by assisting human beings in communities, but the aid must be given so that all members of the community will benefit.

The human person is always subject, not just object. The individual human being must thus never be seen as an object for aid. All types of aid must always involve the needy person in the effort and make the individual human being the protagonist.

Caritas' perception of the human person may be described as personalism, meaning a view of humanity that puts the human person at the centre and at the same time always views the person as part of, and answerable to, a community. The opposite to this is collectivism where the individual person is seen as secondary to the community, and individualism, which asserts the individual person's right above the community.

**66 Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world**

/ The universal declaration of human rights, UN



## MAN'S SOCIAL NATURE: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

**Marriage and family are the cornerstone of society. From this starting point the objective is that all mankind should be tied together in a community of siblings where everybody contributes and everybody gets what they need.**

The primary human community is the family. From this core life originates and to this core the responsibility of the life of others is given. The foundation of the family is marriage, which is the basic cell of society.



The family is the first natural place to learn about community. Here human beings learn to give way and to accept, and here the human person begins developing his or her potential. Here the human person learns responsibility. Here the human person learns about love, truth, kindness, in brief: It is first and foremost in the family we learn to be human, a person in communion with others. This gives the family a natural and special position - also when development efforts or relief initiatives are planned.

There is thus a complex interdependence: The individual person's development depends on the wellbeing of the family but also of the structure of society, and at the same time the progress of the community presupposes the wellbeing of both the families and the individual persons.

At the same time, the family is above the state in the sense that the existence of the state presupposes the existence of the family, for the state exists for the sake of the families, not vice versa. So, on the one hand the state must not deprive the families of the tasks they can handle themselves - alone or jointly with other families. But on the other hand, the state must support the families in order that they can perform their tasks. This is also in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity (see page 18).

But the biological family must not withdraw into itself. The family is an image of a larger reality. The Christian faith in God as Father in fact means that the human community is a community of siblings including all human beings at all times. From this reality the double love commandment originates - the love of God and the love of our neighbour, who is thus always to be viewed as a sister or a brother. The fact that it can be a commandment to love is due to the fact that man's love of God and Neighbour is the answer to the love God has of each human person. "Neighbour" is any human being who needs me and whom I can help - the poor, the hungry, the sick, the stranger, the imprisoned.

One first step towards this love of our neighbour is the struggle for justice. But love is more than justice, for love is not just to give to others what is rightly theirs but to give everything that the others need. Further, love means giving some of oneself and is thus a unique community building force. Love adds to justice also charity and forgiveness, which is that additional free element that exceeds the rights and duties of righteousness and the market principle of giving and taking.

For this reason, also the family is of crucial importance, for it is first and foremost in the family we learn to love, i.e. give and receive something that can neither be bought nor sold but can only be offered voluntarily and mutually. The family group thus serves as a role model for the societal community, which is often based on efficiency and functionality. In society "expensive" citizens (the elderly, children, the disabled, the sick, addicts, strangers, the unemployed etc.) are often viewed as less valuable than those who contribute to society's coffer. Furthermore, it is not just a question of "doing something" for these groups but to acknowledge and appreciate their contributions as being of equal worth.

The commandment to love your neighbour is first and foremost personal - it is up to every human person to try to live up to it. But the commandment also has a collective dimension. Globalisation has brought people all over the world in contact with each other, but it has not led to the establishment of an authentic, global community. Instead, Caritas' vision for the global community is mankind as one big family. Hence, it is also our common responsibility that the individual human being does not only get what he or she is entitled to but gets all that they need, like in a family where everybody is responsible for each other. This collective responsibility manifests itself in Caritas' work as the humanitarian organisation of the whole Church.

In this connection it is important to point to an essential aspect of the love of your neighbour: It is free. Therefore, the Christian charity effort must not be linked to mission. There must be absolutely no ulterior motives or conditions for the aid.

**“Love – caritas – will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love. Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such. There will always be suffering which cries out for consolation and help. There will always be loneliness. There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbour is indispensable.”**

/ Pope Benedikt XVI, Deus caritas est, 2005



## MAN'S RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES & OBLIGATIONS

**Every human being has a number of universal rights, the first and most important of which is the right to life. But every human being also has a number of obligations including the obligation to respect the rights of all others.**

Every human being has a number of universal rights, the first and most important of which is the right to life. But every human being also has a number of obligations including the obligation to respect the rights of all others.

It derives from all human beings' inalienable and equal dignity that every human being has a number of universal rights as they are expressed in the United Nations' Human Rights Declaration. Of these rights the right to life is the list and most important. Caritas regards abortion and euthanasia, and also capital punishment, as a violation of this right. Caritas regards the human life as a gift and thus does not see population growth as a problem. However, Caritas thinks that it is married couples' responsibility to not have more children than they can feed and provide with a reasonable upbringing. At the same time, it is an obligation for the global community to distribute the goods in such a way that all human beings have reasonable access to these.

For millions of people the universal rights are being violated every day, due to the fact, among other things, that far too many people focus on their own rights only and forget the rights of others. However, it makes no sense to talk about universal rights - rights that apply to all human beings, everywhere and at all times - if there is not also a corresponding set of universal duties, first and foremost the duty to respect and promote the rights of others. If you do not think you owe anything to anybody and if you only focus on your own rights, it is impossible to take responsibility for the development of yourself and others.

Without corresponding duties, the human rights lose their universal nature as it becomes a mere

coincidence what and whose rights are being observed.

It thus makes no sense to assert your own right in a human community where the rights of others are being violated, and it becomes particularly grotesque when rich countries assert a right to unnecessary goods while poor countries struggle without access to fundamental rights such as clean water, education and healthcare. This shows that rights without duties turn into an entitled mentality without limits and with no regards for others.

Duties form the ethical framework of meaningful rights. If rights are based on random majority decisions only, they may disappear from one day to the next. But they will not disappear if they are linked to duties and thus placed in a general ethical context. Duties thus do not diminish rights, but duties become prerequisite for the rights being respected.

Also, in international relations there are mutual rights and duties. The rich countries must see it as their duty to help the poor countries to assume their obligations, both the obligations that the poor countries' states have towards their citizens and their obligations towards the international community. Far greater dynamism is generated if these mutual obligations are recognised than if one party only asserts its rights. And it also ensures equality when all parties demand their rights and do their duty. Everybody has both!

There is a need for structural changes both in the relations between the poor and the rich countries e.g. concerning trade - and in the individual poor countries' state structures. But structural changes are impossible without individuals who on the personal level are responsible economic agents and politicians who aim for the common good. Changes on the social level presupposes changes on the personal level - it is through personal choices that changes take place.

Globalisation shows us that mankind shares a common destiny that demands the recognition of a common responsibility for the whole of mankind, but globalisation in itself does not produce this sense of responsibility automatically. The development must thus be guided towards a common goal rather than letting the development guide us. Caritas wants to contribute to leading the development towards a world where peace and justice reign, where the dignity of the human person is regarded as fundamental, and where God's Creation is viewed as a common good.

**“The right to live involves the duty to preserve one’s life; the right to a decent standard of living, the duty to live in a becoming fashion; the right to be free to seek out the truth, the duty to devote oneself to an ever deeper and wider search for it. Once this is admitted, it follows that in human society one man’s natural right gives rise to a corresponding duty in other men; the duty, that is, of recognizing and respecting that right. Every basic human right draws its authoritative force from the natural law, which confers it and attaches to it its respective duty. Hence, to claim one’s rights and ignore one’s duties, or only half fulfil them, is like building a house with one hand and tearing it down with the other.**

/ Saint John XXIII, Pacem in terris, 1963



## THE PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

**The most important measure for a society’s development is how its poorest members live, and to what extent they benefit from the society’s progress and goods.**

It is Caritas’ mission that all human persons acquire the possibility and freedom to realise their full potential, meaning that development results cannot only be measured by calculating the general or average progress. The most important measure for a society’s development is how its poorest members live and to what extent they benefit from the society’s progress and goods.

Experience shows that even if a country as such experiences economic progress or democratic development there is no guarantee that the whole population benefits from this progress. Rather than waiting for a general development in a given society to trickle “down” to the poor, Caritas chooses to focus

on helping the worst off in the countries where we work.

This choice is also in accordance with the Christian faith that God is closest to the poorest, and that every human being and any community will be judged according to how they have acted when meeting the poor, the sick, the strangers, the imprisoned (cf the Gospel according to Matthew 25,31-46).

This preferential option for the poorest is also a question of doing your duty: Every human being has a right to have his basic needs fulfilled. Hence the duty to ensure this if you can. When giving to the poorest what they need you really give them what belongs to them, not your own.

**“For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in, naked, and you covered me, sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me... Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.**

/Gospel according to Matthew 25,35-36.401



## THE COMMON GOOD

**The life situation of an individual can only be improved if the common good is also improved. The common good is not the sum total of the goods of each individual human being, but something that belongs to everybody and which remains common since it cannot be divided, and since it can only be achieved, maintained and increased in communion.**

The common good is the total social conditions that enable people – whether as groups or as individuals – to realise their full potential as unimpeded as possible. The common good is thus not an aim in itself but a precondition for the full realisation of the individual and for all Creation.

The common good is not the sum total of the goods of the individual human beings but something that belongs to all and which remains common since it cannot be divided, and since it can only be achieved, maintained and increased in communion.

The greatest of all goods longed for by the human community is freedom, justice and peace in the world. According to the Human Rights Declaration these goods are only attainable when the dignity and rights of the individual human being are respected. The actions of the community or society therefore gain quality to the extent that they secure the observance of all peoples’ universal rights: food, a roof over our heads, work, education, medical aid, safety, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly and social security.

It is also the responsibility of society to promote the common good, which also includes a well-working legal system, environmental protection, infrastructure, and cultural events. The universality of the fundamental rights obliges any community and any country to also think beyond itself and promote the same goods and rights for others and secure them for future generations.

The common good belongs to everybody, and at the same time all members of society are obliged to promote and maintain the common good. Naturally, the state has a special obligation here since promotion and protection of the common good is an essential part of the *raison d’être* of the state. The common good is the property of the minority as well as the majority. The minority and the majority must therefore be considered on equal terms!

All human beings have a right to have their basic needs met thanks to the goods of Creation. All other rights, including private ownership and trading rights, must therefore be ranked below the universal, natural right to a fair access to the goods for any human being.

At the same time, the individual with his intelligence and his work is able to make part of Creation his own, and this is the foundation of private ownership. It secures for the individual a necessary and reasonable private sphere to exercise his own autonomy and that of his family. But private ownership is secondary to the principle that Creation is for all – it is thus not an absolute right.

The relativity of the private ownership in relation to the common good and everybody’s right to basic necessities also means that the individual person should not regard his possessions as entirely his own. They are also a chance to benefit others! The same applies to the goods that some groups of people or countries own in common. It is a duty to also to some extent use these goods for the benefit of the development of the poorer countries. Today also knowledge and technological infrastructure belong to property, which should not be kept in the hands of a few countries.

The love of your neighbour is to mean well (intention) and to work towards achieving this good (practice). The love of your neighbour may be exercised at two levels. First at the entirely personal level where another individual is specifically targeted. But there is a common good beside the individual good. A common good aimed for the benefit of each individual human being in the community. To contribute to the common good is thus also a way to love your neighbour, the institutional way of love, so to speak. And the name of Caritas (Love) is precisely to be understood in this sense.

**“Work thus belongs to the vocation of every person; indeed, man expresses and fulfils himself by working. At the same time, work has a “social” dimension through its intimate relationship not only to the family, but also to the common good (...). Man combines his deepest human identity with membership of a nation and intends his work also to increase the common good developed together with his compatriots, thus realizing that in this way work serves to add to the heritage of the whole human family, of all the people living in the world.**

/Saint John Paul II, Centesimus Annus and Laborem exercens, 1991





## SUBSIDIARITY

**The principle of subsidiarity ensures that tasks are performed and decisions are made as close to the persons affected by them as possible. Only in this way can the individual human being and the close communities make their unique contributions to the development of society.**

You cannot promote respect for the individual human being's dignity without being concerned about the family, about other close communities, about the state and about the entire civil society: all the social, economic, political, professional, cultural, recreational organizations and expressions that human creativity brings to life. All these various relationships make up and strengthen the social cohesion and form the foundation of the community.

It is the task of the state to create the framework within which these activities can unfold. And it is the task of the state to grant the necessary financial, legal, and institutional assistance in order that these activities are encouraged in the best way. Further, the state must ensure that all members of society have equal access to basic welfare benefits,

including particularly education and healthcare. But the involvement of the state must be in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, which may be described as the social philosophy of the Catholic Church:

‘Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organisations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them.’ (Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimi Anno)

The principle ensures that any human being and any group of people give to the community their unique contributions which cannot and must not

be substituted by the State or other higher institutions. This makes room for the participation of the individual person and ensures diversity.

Further, the principle is a guarantee against centralisation, bureaucratisation, and certain forms of excessive public assistance where the state weakens the private initiative and responsibility to the detriment of both the individual person and the community.

Also, the principle of subsidiarity aims at promoting the family and small, private initiatives and organisations. It ensures pluralism and dynamism in society and a reasonable balance between the public and private spheres, and it gives the individual a greater responsibility for the others and thus strengthens the community.

It is a matter of participation rather than receiving and being passive. And this participation is a precondition for a healthy and viable democracy. Any democracy thus presupposes involvement and listening to its citizens at all levels while exercising governmental power. The diametrically opposite practice is seen in dictatorial and totalitarian regimes, which a priori exclude such participation entirely.

The Christian faith makes it a duty to collaborate with everybody – regardless of faith and political conviction – who wishes to promote the human family. And it must be in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, which expresses human freedom, and which restricts any patronising or condescending aid. Globalisation must not be governed by a central system or power but according to this principle by a large number of layers of individuals and organisations in a mutual, coordinated collaboration.

The principle of subsidiarity must be constantly linked to the principle of solidarity (see Principle 7). Subsidiarity without solidarity means particularism and maybe even protectionism. Solidarity without subsidiarity means nannyism, which humiliates those that are helped.

The balance between subsidiarity and solidarity is especially important in connection with international development activities. Here these principles may be transformed into Caritas' basic rule to grant help to self-help in order that the recipient is not kept in a state of dependence on the helper: At the same time, it must be ensured that also the recipients respect the balance in order that the help does not foster local dominance and exploitation.

**66 The principle of subsidiarity protects people from abuses by higher-level social authority and calls on these same authorities to help individuals and intermediate groups to fulfil their duties. This principle is imperative because every person, family and intermediate group has something original to offer to the community. Experience shows that the denial of subsidiarity, or its limitation in the name of an alleged democratization or equality of all members of society, limits and sometimes even destroys the spirit of freedom and initiative.**

/Compendium of The Social Doctrine of The Church



## SOLIDARITY

**Solidarity is not just a vague feeling of sympathy or an abstract attitude, but a concrete and permanent dedication to, in practice, fight for the common good and for the just and fair access of everybody to benefit from earth's resources and to take part in society.**

This day and age are characterised by an ever-increasing awareness of all human beings' interdependence, of our fundamental common destiny. And technology has made it possible to establish a connection between people all around the world.

Nevertheless, there are extreme differences in our standard of living – within the individual countries and between countries. Apart from being unfair these inequalities are also the source of tension and unrest and a real obstacle to the establishment of a truly global community. As a moral value solidarity must help break down the unfair structures that keep individuals or whole populations in poverty. These structures must be transformed into solidarity structures through changes of laws, market rules, and international agreements.

Solidarity is not just a vague feeling of sympathy or an abstract attitude, but a concrete and per-

manent dedication to, in practice, fight for the common good and for the reasonable access of everybody to benefit from earth's resources and to take part in society. Solidarity also requires a willingness to act by relinquishing something oneself to benefit individuals or for the common good.

Solidarity presupposes the realisation of the individual to have received something from the community. This realisation leads to gratitude which leads to a willingness to solidarity thus ensuring the continuity of the community. Solidarity can and must be exercised jointly but must result from the personal realisation of the individual.

Therefore, a fair and just society cannot be established by delegating all responsibility to the State and letting the State distribute the goods and benefits. If you give only what you are obliged to by paying taxes to the welfare state, or if you give only to get (the market), then the community will never really form a complete whole. This does not happen until each and everybody gives based on a personal and fraternal attitude, gives for the good of the other; nothing else. The State and the Market therefore need the civil society in all its aspects as well as the personal commitment of the individual citizen if a community comprising all human beings is to be established.

**66 Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs.**

/ St. John Chrysostom, Hom. in Lazaro



## STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S CREATION

**Caritas believes that everything was created by God and leads back to God. Creation is at the disposal of man, but not haphazardly: Everything that has been created is good and demands respect and therefore man must utilise it responsibly.**

Where does everything come from, and where does all that is, go to?

The answer to these two questions about the origin and final goal of everything is crucial to the meaning and orientation of our lives and our actions as individuals and as a community.

Caritas believes that everything was created by God and leads back to God. Man occupies a unique position in Creation in that everything was created for the good of man. Creation is thus at man's disposal, but not haphazardly: All that is created is good and demands respect and therefore must be utilized responsively – man as steward of Creation must “answer” to his management of it.

In the utilisation of Creation it is thus a question of finding a balance between the devastating abuse of the natural resources and an almost sacrosanct attitude of “don't touch it” towards nature. Nature was given to mankind to exercise stewardship over and cannot be equalled to, and certainly not be placed above, the human person!

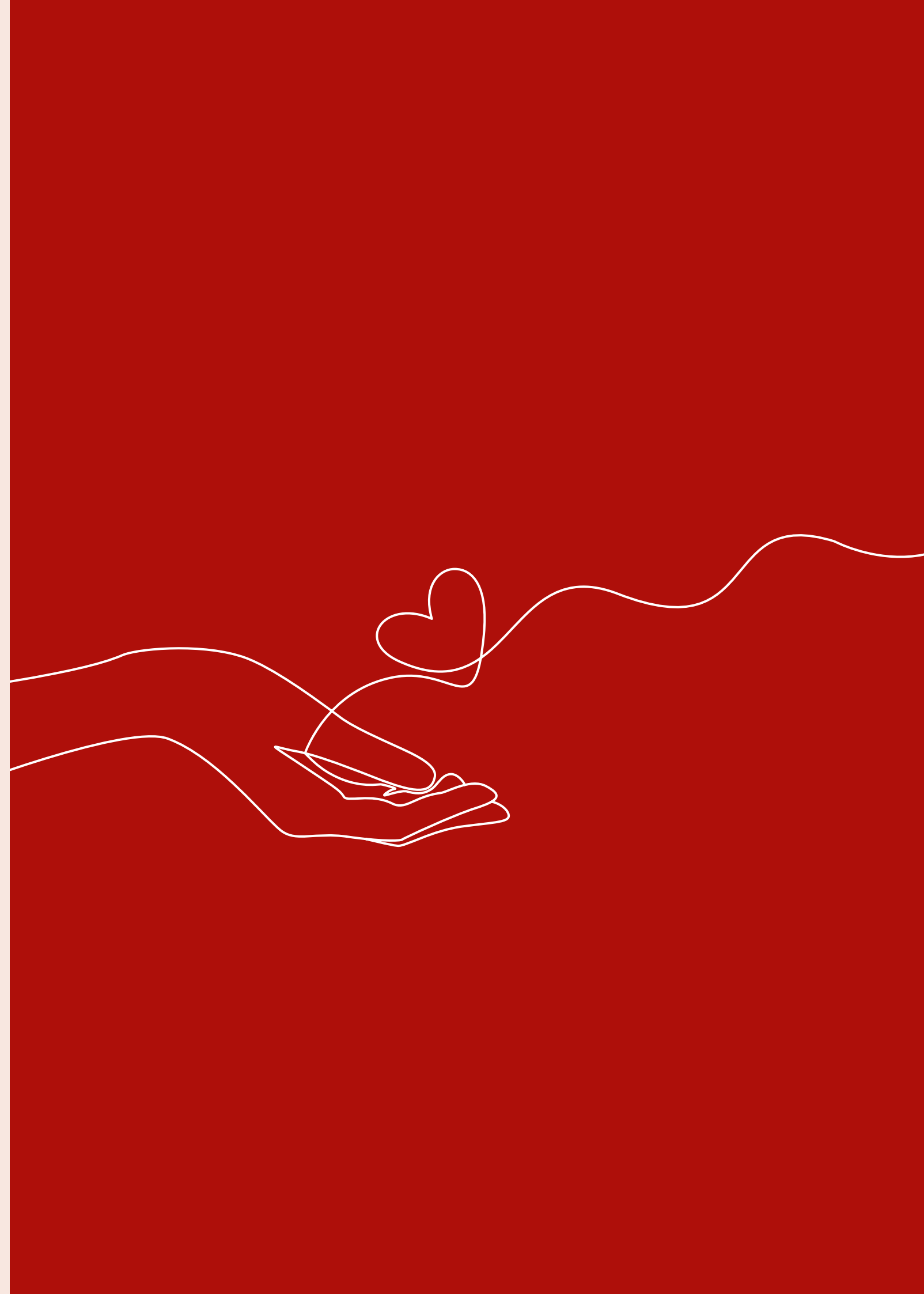
An important pan of Creation is the environment, which constitutes the physical limits for all human beings. The environment is a common good given to us to oversee and protect. The climatic problems make it obvious to us that environmental protection is a universal task both geographically and chronologically: God's Creation must be protected all over the world, because it is valuable in itself and because future generations depend on its preservation. Environmental protection today also means taking energy resources into account. The disproportionately large consumption of conventional sources of energy of the rich countries can be extremely damaging to developing countries and expose them to exploitation. The rich countries therefore have an obligation to reduce their energy consumption and develop sustainable energy to ensure that the poor countries also have access to the necessary energy resources.

Human beings treat themselves as they treat nature – and vice versa. In many parts of the world culture has developed into consumerism with insufficient regard for and awareness of the damage such behaviour does to the surroundings, including surroundings far away from where the consumption takes place.

Instead of merely trying to remedy this damage to Creation and thus to other human beings' lives we need a shift in mentality and a new lifestyle in the rich countries, a lifestyle where investments, consumption and savings are also governed by a quest for the wellbeing of all other people and communion with them. Such a new lifestyle, which, contrary to consumerism, is in accordance with man's origin and final goal, will benefit the individual human person as well as the community, and in addition have a positive effect on the global environment.

**“ Human beings legitimately exercise a responsible stewardship over nature, in order to protect it, to enjoy its fruits and to cultivate it in new ways, with the assistance of advanced technologies, so that it can worthily accommodate and feed the world's population. On this earth there is room for everyone: here the entire human family must find the resources to live with dignity, through the help of nature itself – God's gift to his children – and through hard work and creativity. At the same time, we must recognize our grave duty to hand the earth on to future generations in such a condition that they too can worthily inhabit it and continue to cultivate it**

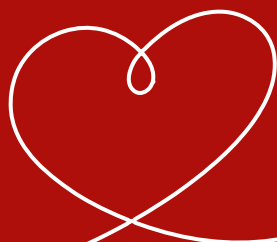
/ Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas in veritate, 2009



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**The symbol of the heart has often been used to express the love of Jesus Christ. Some have questioned whether this symbol is still meaningful today. Yet living as we do in an age of superficiality, rushing frenetically from one thing to another without really knowing why, and ending up as insatiable consumers and slaves to the mechanisms of a market unconcerned about the deeper meaning of our lives, all of us need to rediscover the importance of the heart.**

/ Pope Francis, Dilexit nos, 2024



**Caritas**  
Danmark