Caritas Annual Meeting 2026: Chairperson's Report

Dear friends,

It is wonderful to see you all.

I am very pleased to stand before you today and tell you about all the good work that you helped make possible in 2025.

It is thanks to your commitment and support that Caritas exists as an organisation in Denmark at all.

As many of you will know, 2025 was marked by major challenges for the international humanitarian and development sector. The year began dramatically when the world's largest single donor, the United States, effectively dismantled its development agency almost overnight.

This was followed by significant cuts to development assistance from major European donor countries such as France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

At the same time, humanitarian needs continued to grow in many parts of the world due to wars, crises and natural disasters. Millions of people remained displaced, while protracted crises continued to affect many of the countries where we work.

Against this backdrop, there is every reason to welcome the fact that Denmark continued to uphold its international responsibilities last year and remained committed to the UN recommendation of allocating 0.7 per cent of GNI to development assistance.

This meant that, through our strategic partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and thanks to the support of donors, foundations and our Catholic community, we were able to continue making a difference for people in need.

Most fundamentally, it ensured a stable financial position and provided predictability in our work on behalf of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.

As you can see on the map, we are present in many places: Ukraine, Lebanon and Jordan, Burkina Faso and Niger, Uganda, Bangladesh and Myanmar. In 2025, we also provided support to people affected by emergencies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as well as to refugees from Sudan and a development project in Cambodia. We also supported the umbrella organisation representing Caritas organisations across Africa.

For reasons of time, I will not go through everything we achieved in 2025. However, to mention just a few results, through our local Church partners in some of the world's most challenging contexts, we ensured that 77,030 people affected by crises had their most basic needs met. In other words, they gained access to food, clean drinking water, shelter and protection.

Our work is not only about relieving immediate suffering. It is also about creating lasting change that helps entire communities lift themselves out of poverty.

Last year, we contributed to organising 53,595 people into community-based groups such as agricultural cooperatives, savings and loan groups, and advocacy platforms. We also helped 3,597 households become

more resilient to climate change. In addition, 31,393 people received information about their rights, while 19,293 women were strengthened economically, socially or politically.

Although these figures clearly demonstrate the scale of our assistance, they do not tell the whole story. As we are often told during project visits, what matters most to the people we support are the encounters with Caritas staff and volunteers, the reassurance that another human being sees them and not merely their problems.

We are proud that our support helps create the best possible conditions for these encounters to take place.

2025 was also the year in which we developed our new strategy, *Heart for Humanity*, which runs until 2030. The strategy draws inspiration, among other things, from *Dilexit Nos*, the final encyclical issued by Pope Francis before his death, which emphasises the importance of leading with one's heart in encounters with others.

This is precisely what we strive to do across our programmes, both internationally and here in Denmark, where year after year we reach more people in need. In 2025, more than 16,000 people in Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands benefited from our various services. This was 6,000 more than in 2024, which had itself been a record year.

As Caritas Denmark, we are part of the global Caritas family, and many of the migrants and refugees who arrive here already know Caritas from their home countries. They expect us to be there to help. Thanks to substantial grants from foundations and collections in Catholic parishes, we have been able to scale up our efforts and respond to these needs.

As a result, in 2025 we expanded our health services, created more communities for older people from ethnic minority backgrounds, improved access to our counselling services and, through a newly established position, strengthened our ties with Catholic parishes.

An important reason for this success is our growing number of dedicated volunteers. We see this clearly in our youth organisation, Young Caritas, which contributes to our social programmes in Denmark and, last year, also travelled with us abroad to take part in a development project in Cambodia.

This autumn, we will repeat that journey with a new group of young volunteers.

More generally, over the past few years we have made a greater effort to engage young people, including through a strong partnership with Niels Steensens Gymnasium.

In 2025, we succeeded for the second time in securing funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Globus Fund, enabling us to travel to Uganda with students from the school, where they visited our local development projects.

Afterwards, the students joined us at Ungdommens Folkemøde (the Youth People’s Meeting), where they spoke about their experiences and facilitated a workshop. They also taught other young people how to sew reusable sanitary pads like those we distribute in Uganda, helping ensure that girls do not have to stay home from school when they are menstruating.

We were also present with events at Folkemødet (the People's Meeting) on Bornholm, at Himmelske Dage (Churches’ People’s Meeting) in Silkeborg, and at the pilgrimages to Åsebakken and Øm.

Together with our podcast and our contributions to the media, these events are an important way of maintaining visibility, and this aspect of our communications work is becoming increasingly significant.

As I mentioned at the beginning, you, our parish representatives and volunteers, form the backbone of our organisation.

In closing, I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your tremendous commitment. I would also like to extend special thanks to our outgoing parish representatives and warmly welcome the new ones:

- Francieska Petersen succeeds Hans-Jørn Karlsen at Rosenkranskirken on Bornholm.
- Shanika Priyadarshani succeeds Maria Truelsen at Sankt Nikolaj Kirke in Esbjerg.
- Magdalene Rusike succeeds Marc Casals at Sankt Knud Lavard in Lyngby.
- Pelestine Fernando succeeds Maryrose Soosaithas at Sankt Elisabeth Kirke in Holbæk.
- Rosa Tran succeeds Bente Ørum at Sankt Laurentii Kirke in Roskilde.
- Midie Pahigdana Latap succeeds Tranh Binh Nguyen at Sct. Michaels Kirke in Kolding.
- Erik Egholm Sørensen has joined Hellig Kors Kapel in Tønder.
- Lars Mathisen has joined Vor Frue Kirke in Slagelse.

Please join me in giving them all a warm round of applause.

I think my time is also running short. There are many items on the agenda, so I will not say much more, but instead refer you to the latest issue of *Caritas Nyt*, where you can read more in depth about everything that took place at Caritas Denmark in 2025.

Perhaps you have already received a copy, but if not, we have brought some with us today.

Once again, thank you for everything you do for Caritas.

I look forward to speaking with all of you later, whether over a cup of coffee during the breaks or across the table at our shared meals.

In the meantime, I wish you all a very successful annual meeting!