



## Love Thy Neighbour – Annie's Story

**When Annie walked through ADRA's doors for the first time 13 years ago, she was homeless.**

She had just left an abusive marriage and was on her own for the first time in 20 years.

"When I first went to ADRA, it was because I didn't have a place to live," says Annie. "I was on the street. I had nowhere to go."

Annie heard about ADRA through other people in the homeless community. Not only did ADRA provide Annie with food support, but Annie was connected with one of the social workers who helped her access affordable housing. Since then, Annie has been living modestly, but well. She cares for her home and rescue cats with pride, and still visits ADRA for food support when

her pension doesn't stretch far enough to cover all her expenses.

"It's not always easy to live on what you get in the pension," Annie says. "Because you got medication and you got food, you got transport and all that.

"So the pension doesn't always cover everything. But if you are a little bit too short, you just go to ADRA and get help."

# CEO Message



Every four years, the world's best athletes gather to compete in the Olympic Games.

For those of us watching from home, it is an opportunity to see sports we may never usually watch, and to cheer on athletes we may not know as they compete for a once-in-a-lifetime chance at winning an Olympic gold medal.

As a Brazilian-born Australian citizen, I have double the athletes to cheer for. And yet, the moment that has stuck with me from these recent Olympic Games didn't come from an Australian or Brazilian athlete's triumphs. It came from Cuban Mijain López, who competed in the Greco-Roman wrestling.

At the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, López won his fifth gold medal in the Greco-Roman wrestling, becoming the first Olympic athlete in any sport to win five gold medals in the same individual event. This feat is incredible for anyone, let alone for an athlete from a country that has experienced so much social and political turmoil.

At the end of his event, López left his shoes

on the mat, symbolising his retirement and thus ending a once-in-a-generation career. Yet despite his achievements, López insists the fame and accolades have not changed him – he still feels like the same boy who was chasing animals and moving fruit boxes in Herradura.

López's outstanding legacy can teach us so many things – humility, endurance, resilience, strength, commitment. These are the same attributes I see in so many of ADRA's project participants. Their life circumstances are tough, but they are eager to learn from our projects and work to make their lives better.

I think of Barnabas, who now has four thousand cocoa trees producing quality cocoa beans.

I also think of Annie who, at 74 years old, is facing homelessness for the second time.

You can read both Barnabas' and Annie's full stories in this edition of *ADRA News*, as well as updates from across ADRA's programs in Australia and overseas.

As we celebrate 40 years of ADRA in Australia this year, I want to thank you for partnering with us to be Justice, Compassion, and Love for those who need it most.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "DGrellmann". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

**Denison Grellmann**  
CEO, ADRA Australia



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Annie is among the millions<sup>1</sup> of Australians feeling the pressure of the cost-of-living crisis.

"You go into a supermarket, and everything is higher in prices than it has been before. Same with medication. But (ADRA) helps me with food. They help me with any problems I have in the area."

But Annie is facing homelessness once again.

"The biggest, biggest worry in my life is whether I can stay in this place," Annie says. "I've got a little private paradise here; I don't want to be moved out. It's at the back, so I don't get bothered by anyone. And I love cutting the lawn, keeping it nice and clean, and saying, 'See, I can look after it.'"

I wouldn't like that to be taken away from me."

Annie is currently connected with one of ADRA's social workers who is helping her navigate the housing systems in an effort to keep Annie in her home.

"If I have a problem, I know I can just go to ADRA like I'm doing at the moment," Annie says. "I just pray to God that they do not take (my home) away from me now. I mean, I'm 74, so please let me live longer in here."

While ADRA is helping to meet Annie's physical needs through housing support and food relief, for so many clients like Annie, receiving emotional support is equally important.

Every social interaction Annie has on her way to and from the ADRA centre, as well as once she gets there, is crucial to her wellbeing.

"It's nice to go out and talk to people," Annie says. "I talk to people on the bus. Before they know it, they've got my story. And I've got their story. I hate the day I'm not able to do that."

While Annie loves to make new

friends, being able to rely on the emotional support she receives from ADRA is important.

"You're welcomed with open arms, there's someone there to talk to you, and you get the help that you need.

"If anyone is having a problem, I advise you to go to ADRA, because ADRA has been there for me for over 13 years. I've been so down that you wouldn't believe it. But they always managed to put a smile on my face and give me a helping hand. Thank you."

In 2023, ADRA Community Centre Blacktown provided over 40,000 meals to people like Annie who would otherwise go hungry. With the impact of the cost-of-living crisis being felt nationwide, the demand for ADRA's support services has never been higher.

The ADRA Appeal takes place in Adventist Churches during October and is the main source of funding for ADRA's Australian programs.

Your donation today can help Aussies in need, just like Annie, with food relief, housing support, and a safe place to go.

To support ADRA projects in Australia donate at [adra.org.au/donate](https://adra.org.au/donate)  
To support ADRA Community Centre Blacktown  
donate at [adra.org.au/blacktown](https://adra.org.au/blacktown)

<sup>1</sup> 3.3 million people in Australia, including 761,000 children, live in poverty.  
<https://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/a-snapshot-of-poverty-in-australia-2022>

# Barnabas' Story



*Barnabas and his wife Elizabeth with their solar dryer shed*

Barnabas, a 67 year old cocoa farmer in the Solomon Islands, is now earning a good income thanks to hard work and training with ADRA.

“When I was younger, I had a job, but the money I earned fortnightly was very small,” says Barnabas. “So, I decided to return home and start planting cocoa.”

Barnabas owns a 4-hectare cocoa plantation consisting of four thousand Amelando and Trinitario varieties of cocoa trees. He initially received training to grow cocoa from the Ministry of Agriculture. This is the foundation that he was able to build upon when he was introduced to ADRA Australia’s Soul Cocoa Plus Livelihood

Project (SCPLP). Barnabas joined SCPLP through a six-month livelihood program from the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Project in his village in 2022. During that year, the project facilitated a three-day cocoa training workshop. ADRA supported each farmer who attended the training with tools for pruning to kick start their cocoa projects. Barnabas was one of the recipients of these tools, which helped revive his passion for planting new cocoa trees.

“Since ADRA came here, I’ve gained valuable knowledge,” says Barnabas. “This training has enabled me to produce quality sun-dried cocoa beans, which I sell to local buyers.”

In July, the project provided Barnabas with two bags of cement, one roll of green shade netting, and two pan toilets to further his cocoa production. Previously, he has also received clear plastic for his cocoa solar dryer.

SCPLP Project Officer Reidly Harold says, “We provided small assistance to these farmers since they owned cocoa farms but lacked solar dryers. This has essentially helped them improve their infrastructure, especially the solar cocoa dryers.”

“I earn SI\$1500-\$3500 every week selling 40kg to 50kg of my sun-dried cocoa beans to local buyers in Honiara, with prices now reaching SI\$52-\$55 per kilo,” says Barnabas. This has been a notable increase on his past income.

Barnabas has participated in numerous training sessions from different sectors including Commodities Export Marketing Authority (CEMA) and was awarded a certificate from CEMA for his cocoa Integrated Pest and Disease Management (IPDM) and production.

ADRA’s Soul Cocoa Plus Livelihoods Project is currently working with four communities, with plans to expand to new communities over the next five years.

To support this project, visit [adra.org.au/project/soul-cocoa](https://adra.org.au/project/soul-cocoa)



# Ranganai's Story



*Ranganai's crop quality has improved thanks to ADRA's training*

**“My produce was never up to standard. I could never get the same price for my crops as other farmers, and sometimes nobody would buy my produce.”**

Ranganai is a farmer in Zimbabwe. She was widowed in 2004 and at one point was caring for nine children: one of her own, seven from late siblings, and one from her brother who was not doing well.

“It was difficult because all their school fees and related expenses came at the same time,” says Ranganai. “My income was unreliable, but the expenses were constant.”

Ranganai took her produce to the market 2-3 times per week to try to earn enough money to cover her expenses. But her produce was undersized, and she struggled to control pests.

When ADRA started working in her community, Ranganai was eager to participate. Through the ENGAGE Project, which is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), Ranganai received farmer training, seeds for new crops, and was taught to safely utilise fertilisers.

Additionally, ADRA's marketing training taught her how to coordinate her crop production, so she always has produce ready to take to the market.

“I have added green peppers, peas, and beetroot to my crop rotation thanks to the seeds I received from ADRA,” she says. “They fetch a good price at the market.”

By applying everything she learned from ADRA, Ranganai always has quality produce.

Unlike before, she sells all of it, and all at a competitive price.

“This has made a big change in my life,” Ranganai says.

“Now, I can make four times what I was able to earn before.”

Prior to her participation in the project, her family would have an average of two meals a day. Now, they consistently have three meals a day. Thanks to the diversity of crops she is growing, Ranganai's family enjoys a varied diet, which is improving their nutrition.

Now, Ranganai has become a leader not just for her local community but for her whole district. After the initial training with ADRA, Ranganai was elected by her community to become the chair of her farming group. She then represented her farming group at a district level where she was elected to be the district chair.

With the knowledge she has gained, Ranganai is looking to further increase her crop production.

“I'm happy with what I'm doing, but I haven't yet reached my potential,” she says. “My income has increased, but not enough to send all my children to university. And I want all my children to go to university.”





# Disaster Updates

## Papua New Guinea Landslide



At 3am on May 24, a landslide struck Yambali village, Enga Province, causing significant casualties and property damage.

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), an estimated 1,400 households and 7,850 people have been directly affected. Reports also indicate that power lines have been cut, clean water is inaccessible, and the area remains unstable.

Enga Provincial Disaster Committee declared a State of Emergency, coordinating relief actions with national and international partners to address immediate needs and prevent further harm. The remote location, terrain instability, civil conflicts, and damage to main roads made it extremely challenging for people to be rescued and for adequate aid to be delivered.

ADRA is on the ground, distributing food, water, and other items, such as bedding, to displaced individuals and families. As well as helping the community to meet their immediate needs, ADRA is also looking to longer-term solutions to help those affected recover and rebuild their livelihoods.

## Gaza Crisis Response



ADRA is taking urgent action to address the hunger crisis facing displaced communities in Gaza in response to the escalating humanitarian crisis in the region.

Amidst the ongoing conflict in Gaza, the plight of the local population has reached critical levels. Recent reports from the United Nations indicate that approximately 30 percent of children under the age of two are suffering from acute malnutrition, while over 70 percent of the population is on the brink of famine and enduring catastrophic hunger.

ADRA, in partnership with non-profit organisations like Anera, has launched the 2024 Gaza Emergency Food Project to extend vital assistance to communities in the region. This joint endeavour encompasses a range of initiatives aimed at addressing the immediate needs of those hardest hit by the crisis.

**Food Distribution:** ADRA's response includes the procurement, preparation, and distribution of more than 28,500 hot meals through community kitchens in North Gaza, ensuring that people are not going hungry.

**Hygiene Support:** ADRA is distributing hygiene kits to promote health and sanitation practices among affected communities, mitigating the risk of disease transmission.

**Food Parcels:** Over 7,300 food parcels have been distributed to those in need. The parcels contain essential items such as potatoes, carrots, cooking oil, tomato sauce, and za'atar.

# Gaza Response – Abed’s Story

Abed Odeh, a 65-year-old resident in the north of Gaza, once led a peaceful life surrounded by his extended family of 25.

A father of eight, Abed saw all his children graduate from university with high honours. “Education has always been important to our family,” he says with pride.

Like everyone else in Gaza, however, Abed’s life turned upside down after October 7.

“We first sheltered at a school in the north, but have had no choice but to flee again and again,” Abed explains.

Currently, Abed and his family are staying at a shelter in the north. After being evacuated eight times, he knows resilience is the key to survival.

“It is too much. You want to just give up and surrender to your fate. But I keep telling myself and my children that we must keep going!”

The conflict has also taken a severe toll on Abed’s finances and health. Without any source of income, it is impossible to buy basic necessities for the family.



*Abed receives a hot meal thanks to ADRA*

“I haven’t been able to buy any necessities. We can’t even afford food.”

Abed suffers from heart disease and says, “Every day, my condition gets worse, because of the stress and the difficulties in finding medicines.”

Abed’s journey, just like the majority of people in Gaza, has also been marked by unimaginable loss.

“I lost three of my amazing grandchildren during these evacuations and the war,” he says, voice breaking. “I can’t bear another loss.

Hopefully, this will end soon and we can begin rebuilding our lives together.”

In these dire circumstances, ADRA’s support, through a partnership with Anera, has been crucial. “I am deeply grateful for these hot meals,” he says. “Without them, I don’t know how we would have survived.”

ADRA’s response to the crisis in Gaza includes providing hot meals, food parcels, and hygiene kits to the most vulnerable who have been displaced.

**To support ADRA’s disaster response efforts, visit [adra.org.au/disaster](https://www.adra.org.au/disaster)**

# Celebrating 40 Years – Laura’s Story

Laura Stephenson is the Operations Manager for Open Heart International, a division of ADRA Australia. Prior to this, Laura was the Manager for ADRA Community Centre Macquarie Fields.



*Laura Stephenson*

“We had many programs in Macquarie Fields, but one of the programs was to assist people with food,” Laura says.

On a scorching hot summer day, Laura and her team of volunteers were packing up after an extra-long day at the centre and everyone was looking forward to getting home.

“Just as I was about to close the door, a voice called out to me,” Laura says. “He sounded really distressed. He just said, ‘Please wait, please wait!’”

In a few moments a family of five appeared from the centre’s back gate. They appeared flushed and out of breath. They asked Laura if the centre was already closed. She confirmed they were just about to close but nonetheless she ushered them in and offered them a seat and a cold drink.

The volunteers also came back into the centre to see how they could help. Then the family shared their story.

Mohammed, his wife Zahra, and their three young children

had walked 13km from Campbelltown to Macquarie Fields. They were refugees, only recently relocated from Afghanistan, and had walked to the ADRA centre because they had no car seat for their baby and didn’t realise they didn’t need one on a bus.

“Mohammed said that they came because of the four letters of ‘A D R A’. They didn’t know what ADRA stood for, but what it meant to them was salvation,” Laura says.

Mohammed was employed by the Embassy of Australia in Afghanistan, a job that was increasingly dangerous.

“The Taliban was targeting him and his family,” Laura explains. “Anyone who worked with any of the embassies was on a list to be executed. They had to flee to get their families out safely.”

Mohammed was told to take his family to the airport and that a plane would be waiting to evacuate those being targeted by the Taliban.

“But the airport had been

surrounded by the Taliban, making it almost impossible to escape with the three children,” Laura says.

Mohammed and his family could see their plane waiting for them on the tarmac. But with the Taliban surrounding the airport, they couldn’t figure out how to reach it.

There was a construction site with a mound of sand on the far corner of the field overlooking the furthest runway. Below was a trench that had filled up with sewage water. The trench ran alongside the airport fence and some men dressed in black were encouraging small groups of people to file into it.

Mohammed and his family joined them and became the last in line. He and his wife, with the three children in tow, started making their way through the knee-high sewage water towards their plane.

“Mohammed carried their youngest son while Zahra was





*Volunteers at the ADRA Community Centre Macquarie Fields*

walking with their daughter,” says Laura. “Their daughter stumbled and almost fell face-first into the sewage water. One of the men who was walking with them grabbed their daughter just in time and carried her the rest of the way.

“Mohammed remembers seeing the letters ‘A D R A’ on the man’s t-shirt as his coat moved to the side. This man carried the little girl all the way. Another one of these men also helped to carry their oldest son.”

Thanks to the extra assistance of these strangers with ‘ADRA’ on their shirts, Mohammed and his family reached the plane.

“They were able to board and they were evacuated safely,” Laura says.

Once in Australia, impeded by language barriers and limited work opportunities, times were tough. Mohammed and Zahra went looking for help.

“Things were really getting difficult for their family and they

searched online for these four letters that meant salvation to them,” Laura says. “They showed us photos and videos of the watery trench, the plane, and their arrival in Australia.

“Zahra became very emotional as she echoed her husband’s account of those traumatic events, saying: ‘ADRA saved us from what would have been certain death at that airport.’”

Mohammed and Zahra’s story struck a nerve with Laura and her team of volunteers.

“For them to look up ADRA and know that if they found ADRA, they would find a solution to the difficulties that they were going through, meant a lot to us. It made us feel that we were part of something bigger.”

Laura and her team of volunteers provided Mohammed and Zahra with what food they had left over from the day, clothes, and other items that would help them settle in Australia. They told them that a car seat is not

needed to ride the bus with a baby in Australia. And one of the volunteers who lived near Campbelltown who had a car seat gave the family a lift home.

“The reason Mohammed and Zahra’s story has impacted me personally is because I too had an experience with ADRA being a salvation to my own family,” Laura shares. “In 1997 in South Africa, just after my father passed away, we had fallen on some really difficult times. It was ADRA South Africa that helped us out. ADRA was there for us and really impacted our lives.

“It’s a great privilege for me to celebrate these 40 years with ADRA because they have had a big impact on me personally and transformed the lives of so many others including Zahra and her family.”

**ADRA is now supporting a small community of refugee families from Afghanistan who learned about ADRA through Mohammed and Zahra.**

# Volunteer Highlights



## National Programs Conference

From July 29 – August 2, 60 volunteers from around Australia attended the ADRA Australia National Programs Conference at Avondale University.

The conference enables ADRA's volunteers to connect with each other, learn from the other community projects, and enjoy fellowship.

There were workshops and presentations from ADRA staff covering governance, policies, strategy, cyber-security, partnerships, advocacy, disaster-ready churches, finance, and marketing.

There were also sessions with invited guests including Dr Darren Morton and Steve Kane. Each night there was also an

event that everyone was welcome to attend, including a gospel concert with Cybele Coutet Craig, a trivia night, and a games night.

By the end of the conference, the volunteers shared the various ways the conference had impacted them spiritually, socially, and with an increase in knowledge. Here are some of the responses to the anonymous survey.

**Spiritual:** "We have come to a turning point in the history of the church and ADRA. I realised the church needs ADRA more than ever to be relevant to the gospel message."

**Social:** "The biggest takeaway was networking with all the other ADRA staff and volunteers, building relationships with head office, and knowing their names and job roles."

**Knowledge:** "The workshops were fantastic... the leadership knowledge was amazing."

"The biggest takeaway was how much I learnt about the bigger picture of ADRA and what we do worldwide. I can now confidently share that."



## Spirit of Sanitarium Connections Trip

In mid-August, ADRA Vanuatu hosted an ADRA Connections team from Sanitarium Health Food Company, Vitality Works, and Life Health Foods.

Together with a local team, the 14 ADRA Connections participants worked to complete a toilet block which services the Elang Family Support Services Centre in Etas. This family counselling centre, which is part of ADRA Australia's Blossom Project, caters to the social, physical, mental, and spiritual needs of victims of gender-based violence.

"The many clients who access this facility for counselling and life skills trainings will have improved health and sanitation due to the hard work and support from the Sanitarium team," says ADRA Vanuatu.

"Tankio tumas Sanitarium team, for making a positive impact in



*The National Programs team*



*Spirit of Sanitarium Connections Trip*

the lives of our people.”

Not only will the completed toilet block benefit the community in Etas for years to come, the ADRA Connections participants were deeply moved by the experience.

“In this past week, I have learned about the power of compassion, love and justice,” says Ash Gupta, Senior Workplace Health Consultant for Vitality Works.

“I saw first-hand how kindness,

teamwork and determination can move mountains (of more than just soil and cement). I was deeply honoured to work beside some of the most inspiring people I’ve ever met.”

## Gift in Will – Laurence’s Story

When Laurence was 19 years old, he stepped onto Australian soil for the first time. Emigrating from Ireland, he settled in Victoria and began working with VIC Transportation.

Growing up Catholic, Laurence has always believed in God. But when he came to Australia he was introduced to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and was given his very own copy of the Bible.

Throughout his working life, Laurence has generously given

to charitable causes. He has always been aware of the hardship many experience, and feels it is his calling as a Christian to bless others.

“As a donor, I am only passing on what the Lord has lent to me,” Laurence says.

For decades, Laurence has trusted ADRA with his precious donations, faithfully giving each month when possible. He feels so strongly about helping others that he has left a gift to ADRA in his Will.

“There is a lot of Christianity in

a loaf of bread, a lot of the gospel in a warm handshake and a helping hand,” he says.

“I think that the mission factor, coupled with know-how and the genuine determination to help people succeed and to bring out the possibilities to achieve better outcomes, is what makes ADRA unique.

“We have the expertise, the motivation, the personnel, to carry the love of God to areas of conflict, to be there for those who have nothing but the clothing that covers them.”

**Just like Laurence, you can leave a gift in your Will to ADRA as a life-changing legacy for people in need. Visit [adra.org.au/wills](http://adra.org.au/wills)**



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