



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

# In defence of humanity and hospitality



*Burundi: Ciza Espérance collecting wood to cook for her family.*  
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# CONTENT

Foreword	4
Humanitarian interventions	5
Development cooperation	9
Reception and integration	11
Social programmes	16
Our organisation	21
Communication & Mobilisation	23
A strategy for our 'common home': our environmental policy	26
Asylum & Migration programmes in Belgium	27
International cooperation programmes: map	28
International cooperation programmes	29
Financial report	32
Thank you!	35

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## FOREWORD

### In defence of humanity and hospitality



Nearly 300 million people are currently in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, the United Nations warns. The main causes are conflicts, climate disasters and high economic inequality. These elements often intertwine, as for example in the eastern and southern parts of Africa, where there are inextricable conflicts and where droughts and floods alternate. The media talks little about the region, but about 75 million people are displaced or find themselves living in extremely difficult conditions.

In 2023, the situation got worse with earthquakes in Syria, Türkiye and Morocco, the eruption of conflict in Sudan and, in October, the massacre in Israel that was followed by extremely violent repression in Gaza. The war in Ukraine became a war of attrition, reminiscent of the horrors in the trenches in 1914-1918.

In all these situations of great suffering, Caritas is present: before, during and after. 'Where there is a need, there is a Caritas': this motto of Caritas Europa is not just a slogan, it is the reality on the ground, thanks to the network of 162 Caritas organisations active in the world every day.

Anyone reading this annual report will see how Caritas International works in Belgium: through its reception, advice, support and integration of migrants, especially those who are most physically and mentally vulnerable, and unaccompanied minors. You will also discover our actions abroad, with emergency aid and integral development. Especially in zones affected by conflicts, in Africa, in the Middle East, in Ukraine and its neighbouring countries, where Caritas is often among the most important and most reactive humanitarian organisations on the ground.

These actions are only possible thanks to the great work, enthusiasm and competence of Caritas staff and volunteers, in circumstances that are often very difficult. They are also possible thanks to the faithful support of countless donors and public authorities.

Our mission requires human and material resources, but even more so an inner *élan* that makes us look at those who suffer. We refuse to avert our gaze from those who would otherwise be pushed aside.

In 1948, the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) asked Caritas in Europe to find solutions and shelters for 'the people nobody wants', the elderly, refugees with mental or physical vulnerabilities, serious illnesses and disabilities and orphans... As a result of this call, our association was founded in 1949.

In 2024, Caritas International celebrates its 75th anniversary. An opportunity to concretely show our gratitude to all collaborators, volunteers and donors. This also gives us a chance to take some distance, renew our inspiration and rethink our strategy and actions so that we can increasingly focus our energies and resources on those with the greatest needs.

**Bernard Woronoff**, *Chairman of the board of directors at Caritas International*

François Cornet was Chief Executive Officer International from 2015 to 2023. We would like to thank him for all the years of enthusiastic commitment to Caritas. Even after his retirement, François remains very active as his passion for humanitarian and spiritual actions has certainly not disappeared.

We also thank Luc Van Haute who accepted to take up the torch as Chief Executive Officer in early 2024. Luc listens to everyone, and his experience and vision are already proving very useful to strengthen the mission of Caritas International and fuel its inspiration.

# Humanitarian interventions

## Meeting basic needs

In early February 2023, parts of Syria and Türkiye were hit by devastating earthquakes, with dramatic humanitarian consequences. In the wake of this natural disaster many organisations in the Caritas network, including Caritas International, leapt into action.

Unfortunately the war in Ukraine showed no signs of abating, and a peaceful resolution seems further away than ever. The Caritas network continued to provide support in order to alleviate the huge humanitarian impact this is having on Ukraine and various neighbouring countries.

The rest of the world was not spared from crises requiring humanitarian interventions either. Caritas Internationalis, which coordinates the emergency aid provided by the worldwide Caritas network from its office in Rome, published no fewer than 36 emergency appeals. Here we provide an overview of our work and the ways in which we were able to ensure people's basic needs were met.

## Earthquakes in Türkiye, Syria and Morocco

During the night of 6 February 2023, southern Türkiye and north-western Syria were hit by a major earthquake. This natural disaster caused a great deal of material damage, left more than 50,000 people dead and affected a further 15 million people.

The epicentre of the earthquake was in Türkiye, but Syria was heavily affected too. In Syria, the disaster hit an area that had already been totally devastated by years of civil war as well as zones where armed conflict is still ongoing.

The Caritas network responded to the situation while taking account of the various realities in both countries. The local Caritas organisation in Türkiye, which operates with modest resources in a sensitive environment, was nonetheless able to provide considerable aid thanks to the support of the international network. A large number of essential items were distributed to survivors, and containers were brought in and set up as temporary accommodation. Caritas Syria, which already had far more experience with humanitarian aid as a result of the country being in a state of civil war for years now, was able to quickly provide aid to survivors and offer material support, cash and counselling.

### EARTHQUAKES IN SYRIA AND TÜRKIYE: SUPPORT FROM CARITAS INTERNATIONAL

For Caritas Syria	€ 525,000
For Caritas Türkiye	€ 325,000
<b>TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN 2023</b>	<b>€ 850,000</b>

In the far north-west of Syria, in the area surrounding the city of Idlib, Caritas International provided support to a highly reputable and experienced NGO.

Interventions in the affected regions are still ongoing. In addition to meeting the immediate needs of the population, it is also important to think about the next phases: how can we help the people affected truly get their lives back on track? In this respect we focused in particular on the most vulnerable individuals, such as Syrian refugees in Türkiye who are often 'forgotten' when it comes to official operations. There are still many Syrian refugees living in the area around the Turkish border.

On 8 September 2023, Morocco was also hit by an earthquake. Although the context in Morocco is different, the human suffering and sorrow experienced there was just as devastating as in Syria and Türkiye. Caritas Morocco also received a lot of support from the international Caritas network. Caritas Morocco is a small organisation, but is well embedded within a local civil society network that is both efficient and dynamic. In this region, particular attention is being paid to Sub-Saharan migrants in Marrakesh and a number of villages which were simply abandoned to their fate. Caritas International responded to an emergency appeal from Morocco, sending a contribution of EUR 68,000.

## Major humanitarian crisis in Gaza

Caritas International has been supporting humanitarian efforts and development projects in Palestine for many years now. We do this via our partner organisation Caritas Jerusalem. Our collaboration with Caritas Jerusalem makes it possible to organise medical assistance in the Gaza Strip as well as carrying out socio-economic development projects in the West Bank. The work done by Caritas Jerusalem covers basic healthcare, education, entrepreneurship and agricultural projects, with a particular focus on women and young people.

Much of the work in Gaza has had to be suspended following the Israeli bombardments in response to the Hamas attack on 7 October 2023. The humanitarian situation in Gaza has since deteriorated significantly. At the end of 2023, there were reported to be around 1.9 million displaced persons in Gaza and around 21,000 people killed, 70% of whom were women and children. More than 50,000 people have been left wounded. There was also a surge in violence in the West Bank with more than 300 people killed, including 70 children.

Nonetheless, Caritas Jerusalem was able to continue providing food and essential items for hundreds of displaced persons seeking safety in Church buildings. Unfortunately, two Caritas Jerusalem colleagues and members of their families were killed during bombings in Gaza.

The clinic that Caritas Jerusalem has been running since the early 2000s in Gaza City, in the north of the Gaza Strip, had to be closed as a result of the violence. However, the organisation continued providing healthcare services to displaced persons thanks to two mobile clinics that operate whenever the security situation allows.

Numerous Palestinians from the West Bank lost their jobs as a result of the closure of border crossings. For many families, it has become extremely hard to make ends meet. Our five-year programme COHERENCE, which is continuing to operate despite the difficult circumstances, offers some families the chance to start up income-generating activities in anticipation of better times.

**The Secretary General of Caritas Jerusalem, Anton Asfar, has called for an ‘immediate and general ceasefire’. Asfar called upon the Israeli authorities to remove all road blocks so that humanitarian organisations could continue working unimpeded in Gaza. He asked the international community to ramp up its diplomatic efforts and to bring all its political influence to bear in order to prevent the humanitarian crisis from growing even worse.**

## War in Ukraine

Throughout 2023 we continued to keep a close eye on the crisis in Ukraine and to demonstrate solidarity with the population, as the war is still costing human lives as well as causing enormous material damage. The war is also having a major impact on neighbouring countries, which have taken in large numbers of Ukrainian refugees.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors as well as subsidies and contributions from 12-12, Caritas International has been able to continue supporting our colleagues in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries, including Caritas Slovakia. In Slovakia, we financed a comprehensive programme

offering psychosocial support to refugees from Ukraine. Some of the colleagues working on this programme came to Slovakia as refugees themselves.

### HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN UKRAINE: SUPPORT FROM CARITAS INTERNATIONAL

For Caritas Ukraine	€ 800,000
For Caritas Slovakia	€ 600,000
For Caritas Poland	€ 200,000
Other interventions	€ 50,000
Ukraine Info Point	€ 244,172
<b>TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN 2023</b>	<b>€ 1,894,172</b>

## / Tatiana is rebuilding her home with support from Caritas



© Caritas Ukraine

**On 26 March 2022 Tatiana, mother of a large family, was forced to leave her home in Kyselivka, near Mykolaiv. However, the entire family later returned to Kyselivka to start to restore their lives. Staff from Caritas in Ukraine helped the family rebuild their home. Now the family can once again look optimistically towards the future.**

## Ukraine Info Point continuing its work

In 2023, around 17,000 people came over to Belgium from Ukraine. Most of them received temporary protection in our country. Refugees from Ukraine make up a large group of newcomers, so our Ukraine team continued its work in 2023: two Ukrainian colleagues and two Belgian legal experts run an Info Point, which is essentially a telephone helpdesk. They were available every weekday afternoon to answer questions from people who had come over from Ukraine or were considering fleeing. The team is there to help people from Ukraine as well as host families or professionals who may have questions. They receive phone calls not only from Belgium, but also from Ukraine and other countries.

In 2023, we were able to handle more than 1500 cases. 81% of phone calls were in Ukrainian. The rest took place in Dutch, French, English or Russian. Most of the questions concerned the possibility of obtaining protection (20%), housing or emergency accommodation (21%) and social support (19%).

As the widespread conflict in Ukraine entered its second year, we saw the complexity of the problems increase. The links that many Ukrainians have formed with our country are growing stronger. This means that situations are arising that sometimes require extremely close monitoring. In such situations, our colleagues focus on mediation and on seeking pragmatic and effective solutions. With interest in the situation waning and available funding diminishing, the pressure on the team is growing.

In addition to working the phones, they are involved in a lot of training and awareness-raising in relation to helping people from Ukraine living in Belgium.

## Humanitarian situation in Congo

### CLOCs IN SOUTH KIVU PROVING THEIR WORTH

In mid-2023 there were 6.1 million displaced persons in DR Congo. The majority of these 'internally displaced persons' were concentrated in North and South Kivu, as well as Ituri. On 16 June 2023, the UN triggered the system for intensifying humanitarian operations in Eastern Congo.

In the second half of 2023, almost a quarter of the Congolese population was facing severe food shortages. This was due to the impact of armed conflicts, the isolation of certain regions and a lack of options for transporting, processing and storing agricultural products. Climate-related issues such as prolonged droughts and excessive rainfall also played a role.



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With funding from the Belgian Foreign Affairs Ministry, our partners Caritas Bukavu and Caritas Kasongo in South Kivu assisted local citizens' committees, or 'CLOCs', which did fantastic work in 40 villages. These committees do a lot for survivors of sexual violence, hand out microloans and hold classes where people can learn how to read, write and do maths.



**Bandeke Mubalama Munzungu (38) is father to seven children. He received support from a citizens' committee in South Kivu and has now returned to living a peaceful life in his village. 'I am a member of a royal family, but I am being persecuted as a result of a power struggle,' Bandeke explains. 'I was unjustly imprisoned, but was unable to appeal because it was being orchestrated by a strongman. The people from the CLOC visited me and took care of things for me. The police were demanding a huge amount of money for my release. I didn't have that kind of money. The committee ensured that I was able to buy my freedom with the money that I did have.'**

Over the last year, Caritas was able to train and support 575 committee members. The committees enhanced their collaboration with local authorities. 40 employees from healthcare institutions learned how to provide better support to survivors of sexual violence. More than 820 survivors received support from the CLOCs and healthcare institutions. Between December 2021 and November 2023, more than 1100 information sessions were organised; these reached more than 103,000 people in total.

### DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RAPID RESPONSE

In South Kivu and Maniema, we helped communities better prepare for disasters with funding from ECHO. This took place in collaboration with Caritas Bukavu, Caritas Kasongo and our English colleagues from CAFOD. Over a period of 24 months, the consortium provided support to 111 communities in the two provinces. Cash was distributed to a total of nearly 99,000 people facing sudden crises in Kalehe, Kabare, Walungu, Mwenga, Fizi, Kabambare, Pangi and Lubutu. Nearly 13,900 people were given equipment to help them recommence their economic activities. After the severe flooding and earthquakes in the Kalehe area in early May 2023, which left 447 people dead and many others missing, cash was distributed to 1265 affected families in the village of Bushushu.

### CASH AND HEALTHCARE

In western Congo, a humanitarian crisis emerged in Mai-Ndombe and its neighbouring provinces. Tensions between various communities in Kwamouth territory took a heavy toll, with around 400,000 people displaced. The ramifications of the conflict were also felt in Kwango and Kwilu.

Caritas International and the Commission Diocésaine Justice & Paix (Diocesan Justice & Peace Committee, CDJP) monitored the situation in the conflict zone. Together with various partners, we wrote a number of reports on the difficult humanitarian situation. However, the crisis attracted little attention in the media and the humanitarian sphere.

As the UN body OCHA has not yet been able to open an office in Mai-Ndombe, Caritas International is temporarily acting as the national humanitarian contact point in collaboration with the CDJP and the NGOs Magna, Cause Rurale and Canacu. The aim is to exchange information, to analyse needs, to monitor the humanitarian situation and to do advocacy.

Caritas International and its local partners received funding from ECHO to help address the crisis in Mai-Ndombe. On 1 June 2023, a project was launched to provide humanitarian aid to 24,000 people in the form of cash as well as healthcare and food support; this project will run until 31 May 2024. A mobile clinic was set up in the Kwamouth healthcare zone.

## **Armenia: support for refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh**

In September 2023, Azerbaijan launched a blitz attack on the self-declared republic of Nagorno-Karabakh. This brought an end to the centuries-long Armenian presence in this mountainous region. Almost the entire population, estimated at 120,000 people, fled to Armenia.

Thanks to substantial financial support from a major donor, Caritas International is able to help its partner Caritas Armenia address the needs of the many thousands of refugees. Caritas Armenia attempted to help as many families as possible find accommodation, provided camping beds, supplied meals, handed out hygiene supplies and organised psychological support.

More than 3000 hot meals were provided to refugees who were able to reach Armenia via the Lachin corridor. Vulnerable families also received cash support to help them get through the winter; they needed warm blankets, heating and electrical domestic appliances. An average sum of EUR 195 was distributed to around 300 families (1245 individuals) in the Syunik and Ararat provinces and in Yerevan.

There had already been an exodus of some of the inhabitants of the enclave during a previous offensive mounted by Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020. Some of those refugees did later return to their homes. This time, the chances of the refugees returning to Nagorno-Karabakh are slim, as agreements have been signed that essentially amount to the total dissolution of the republic of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Caritas International is also supporting efforts to help families who fled Nagorno-Karabakh back in 2020 and established themselves in Lori, an area in the north of Armenia. This programme, which has been running for a number of years now, provides access to psychological, social and financial support and helps to lift refugees from their isolation. In the Lori area, Caritas Armenia offers the newcomers, most of whom are arable and livestock farmers, the opportunity to build up a stock of animals or

helps people acquire skills that are in demand on the labour market. The programme also puts refugees from both the current and previous waves in contact with people in the local population in the spirit of mutual solidarity.

## **Humanitarian protection via ProHuma**

People who are forced to flee as a result of war or natural disasters find themselves in an incredibly vulnerable situation and desperately need humanitarian protection.

Over a period of two years (November 2021–October 2023), operations were conducted in close collaboration with local partners and with financial support from the Belgian Directorate General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) with the aim of better protecting refugees and displaced persons in Niger, Burundi, Uganda and Jordan and supporting host communities. We achieved excellent results in terms of protecting vulnerable groups and supporting survivors of sexual violence, strengthening social cohesion, socio-economic reintegration and legal support for refugees, displaced persons and returnees.

For the next two years (November 2023–November 2025), we will be continuing our efforts in Niger, Burundi, Uganda and DR Congo, once again with the support of the DGD.

**As part of the ProHuma programme, our local partner Caritas Développement Niger (CADEV) is responsible for implementing a humanitarian programme in the Diffa region (south-eastern Niger), which is being financed by the DGD.**

**There are many refugees living in this region. The programme aims to provide emergency aid, for example by distributing food, cash, hygiene supplies and school materials. It is also involved in building community latrines, providing vocational training for young people and offering support for people wanting to start up economic activities. The target group primarily consists of women and girls, survivors of sexual violence and abused or abandoned children.**



# Development cooperation

## Tackling the causes of crisis and poverty

COHERENCE – which stands for COHEsion and REsilieNCE – is a key component of the activities of our international cooperation department. This is a five-year programme (2022–2026) which is being implemented in Belgium, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ethiopia, Niger, Palestine and DR Congo. The programme was developed and is being implemented in collaboration with the Commission Justice & Paix and various partners from the Caritas network in other countries. It is funded by the DGD.

Our programme aims to promote a new approach to social cohesion, entrepreneurship and disaster preparedness. In 2023, the programme had to adapt to changing circumstances. In DR Congo and Palestine, our intervention zones were suddenly confronted with conflicts; in DR Congo this meant we had to relocate our activities.

**“In DR Congo we are focusing on entrepreneurship, for example through cooperatives or social enterprises. In the vast COHERENCE region around Luvaka, it is an enormous logistical undertaking to transport agricultural products such as cassava or cassava flour to markets in cities. The villages where the cassava is grown are extremely remote, and can only be reached by dirt tracks that are barely usable during the rainy seasons. Yet selling these products at markets is essential to ensuring the cooperatives make a profit.”**

The one activity we were all looking forward to was the enriching meeting between the members of the steering committee held in Belgium in September 2023, which was attended by delegates from all partner country organisations. We spent an entire week taking a look at the bigger picture, critically appraising our programme’s theory of change based on our experiences and specific projects in the various countries, thinking about key concepts within the programme and planning the interim evaluation together. The outcome was that our original analysis was correct, and the activities launched should lead to the desired changes.

In the steering committee we also discussed the future and the next important steps in the programme.

Last but not least, the week in Belgium was an incredible opportunity for all of the people involved in COHERENCE to meet each other in person. During the more informal moments we were able to get to know each other better and enrich the group dynamic.

**In Niger, Caritas Développement Niger run by the diocese of Maradi (CADEV-Maradi) is the Caritas International implementing partner. CADEV-Maradi is supported by a local delegation from Caritas International. Despite the military coup in July 2023, we have been able to continue our work in Niger.**

Under COHERENCE we have a longer term project running in Niger that is being implemented in the Maradi and Zinder regions with financial support from the DGD and Caritas Luxembourg. This programme is based on the ‘triple nexus’ of social cohesion, rural economy and disaster risk reduction.

Agro-ecology plays a crucial role in the entire approach. There is also a lot of collaboration being done with local authorities, with a focus on advocating for the inclusion of people with disabilities in community life.

There is also collaboration with the Niger Red Cross (CRN) in seven villages. CADEV-Maradi focuses on activities and training in relation to food security, developing economic activities, access to drinking water and sanitary facilities and the establishment of service centres; CRN works using a community-based approach in the areas of malnutrition, disease prevention, promotion of hygiene and support for mother/father clubs.

## Strengthening climate resilience in Ethiopia

In 2023, thanks to funding from the Flemish Brabant region, Caritas International was able to launch a project together with a local partner aimed at tackling climate change and soil erosion in one of the districts of Wolaita, a zone in south-western Ethiopia.

Wolaita is plagued by chronic poverty and food insecurity. 85% of the population there is dependent on agriculture. The increasingly irregular rainfall and recurrent droughts are making it incredibly hard to obtain normal crop yields. When yields are insufficient, this also means they do not have enough feed for their livestock. The groundwater level is dropping. Temperatures are rising. Further consequences include an increasing number of livestock with health issues, more diseased crops and a reduction in biodiversity. All this is causing economic and social problems. Poverty is on the rise, and young people – particularly men – are leaving in the hope of earning money elsewhere.

In 2023, support was provided to 440 vulnerable families in Wolaita. The local partner restored the soil in individual fields and community areas and is trying to combat further erosion. Reforestation is also a key element of their approach. We supported a tree nursery producing seedlings on a huge scale, in particular for trees that also offer economic benefits to families (fruit trees, trees that can also be used for animal feed, etc.). This has enabled thousands of trees to be planted. In addition, better ovens have been installed that use less wood in order to reduce the pressure on forest vegetation.

And that's not all. Since March 2023, around 370 women have come together in 20 different self-help groups. The primary function of these groups is to help women save money and improve their access to loans, but they also provide participants with an opportunity to discuss societal issues, tensions in the community, climate change or the consequences of migration. With the help of loans that they have been able to obtain by saving up money, the women are setting up small-scale activities that provide them with an income.

## 'Our Cassava': new programme in Burundi

Thanks to the strategic dialogue organised by the DGD in Burundi, Belgian NGOs have come together to launch a new programme which started in autumn 2023: 'Umwumbati Wacu', which means 'Our Cassava' in Kirundi. This programme, which is being overseen by a consortium, will run for four years. It is supported by three Belgian organisations (Caritas International, Louvain Coopération and Dierenartsen Zonder Grenzen), four Burundian organisations (CAPAD, FLORESTA, UCODE-AMR and INDAES Formation) and our local Caritas partners (Caritas SOPRAD and Caritas ODECO).

**"There is a link with the climate crisis. We're going to call on specialists to teach the farmers better agricultural techniques based on agro-ecological practices. If you want to farm sustainably, you need to take care of the soil and protect it. It's also a question of mitigating the effects of natural disasters, particularly the regular landslides that occur here. There are some good techniques for better keeping the soil in place."**

The programme's emphasis lies squarely on the cassava sector, but it will also provide openings for chicken farmers and vegetable growers. We want to help farmers sell their produce more easily and earn bigger incomes for themselves and the organisations of which they are members. The programme will also offer farmers the opportunity to take out small loans.

'Our Cassava' is a great example of how cooperation can be approached on an even more equal footing. For example, some Burundian partners are helping to finance the programme. We are stronger when all partners work together, allowing us to achieve better results that benefit the vulnerable population in the region.



# Reception and integration

## Individual and collective

2023 was a busy year for the teams working in the area of reception and integration. The employees once again did everything they could to ensure a humane, dignified reception and provide optimum support for people from the various target groups. The commitment of volunteers and the donations received help enormously to ensure the continuation of our work in relation to reception and integration.

Housing problems have worsened over the previous year. There is a major risk that these issues will remain our main challenge in 2024. When applicants for international protection are granted refugee status, they do not have long to find accommodation and sign up for support from the Belgian Public Centre for Social Welfare. At that point they stop receiving support from Fedasil, the federal agency responsible for the reception of applicants for international protection in Belgium, and it is growing increasingly difficult to ensure a seamless transition. There are simply not enough houses or apartments for people with a modest income, and potential tenants must also battle with extremely reticent landlords.

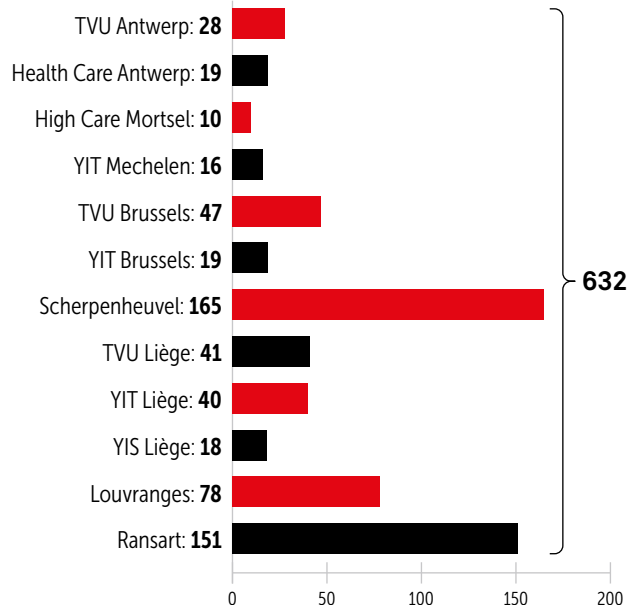
The problems on the housing market are linked to the shortage of spaces in reception facilities. Recognised refugees are staying longer in these centres because they cannot find their own accommodation. When they ask Fedasil if they can stay at the reception facility for longer, they are increasingly being told no.

Our staff working on the projects Transit *Vulnérables*/Youth in Transit/Health Care/High Care are working hard to help refugees make this transition. They are supporting the roll-out of a social and medical network and are forging contacts with government services. However, all of their efforts are in vain if a person or family is unable to find accommodation. Anyone who is unable to find their own place stops receiving support and loses their contact persons. This demonstrates why projects like IFAS in Liège are so important if we want to properly support and integrate refugees.

At the end of 2023 we were managing 632 places in reception facilities for refugees in Belgium.



## NUMBER OF PLACES IN CARITAS INTERNATIONAL ACCOMMODATION



**TVU** = Transition Vulnérables (transition to an independent life for recognised refugees with a vulnerable profile)

**Health Care** = support for individuals with medical issues who have requested asylum

**High Care** = support for individuals and families who have been given leave to remain in Belgium and have severe medical issues

**YIT** = Youth in Transit (transition to an independent life for unaccompanied minors with refugee status or a high degree of recognition)

**YIS** = Youth in Shelter (residential reception facility for unaccompanied minors)



## Accommodation in Antwerp, Mortsel and Mechelen

Our branch in the Antwerp province reported that there had been a significant increase in the occupancy rate at Youth in Transit (YIT). At TVU (for vulnerable individuals in the transition period) the duration people were staying was growing shorter (maximum six months) because Fedasil was refusing many extension requests. Health Care is at maximum occupancy. The medical problems experienced by its residents are becoming more serious, and they are also seeing more cases of psychiatric complications. The situation at High Care is similar.

The four teams responsible for individual accommodation in Antwerp are also dealing with a major baby boom; five of the twelve team members have fallen pregnant and it has been necessary to organise maternity cover.

In Antwerp and the surrounding area the housing shortage is being felt even more acutely. It is almost impossible to find an affordable rental property on the private market. Social rental agencies and social housing companies have also tightened their rules, which is making the problem even worse. People in our target groups are often unable to prove they have a link to the local community, which means they end up at the bottom of waiting lists for social accommodation.

There was one positive development though: last year residents were treated to some great excursions to the Planckendael zoo and Technopolis.

## TVU Antwerp

TVU Antwerp (28 places) offers accommodation to vulnerable refugees during their transition period. This often means large families who require a comprehensive integration programme. The housing scarcity in Antwerp means that people are often forced to move elsewhere after their transition period. This is not easy for families who have already become well integrated in Antwerp.

2023 also saw, for the first time, a family that arrived through the resettlement programme able to access and settle in this housing project.

The team at TVU Antwerp endeavours to help residents become more independent, and provides information about ways to facilitate and foster integration so that people can build their own network.

## Health Care Antwerp

Health Care (19 places) houses individuals with a medical or psychiatric problem whose asylum request is still being processed. This requires extremely intensive, long-term support; the transition period of six months only starts once these individuals have been granted right of residence. Support often has to be provided for over a year.

Our team of three social counsellors is assisted by our own nurse, who also helps out at TVU Antwerp and High Care Mortsel.

Thanks to our contacts at Antwerp FC, some of the residents were able to go and watch a football match last year.

## High Care Mortsel

At High Care Mortsel (10 places), the staff look after extremely vulnerable individuals struggling with medical or psychiatric problems. These people spend their transition period at High Care. Mental well-being is integral to their work. The team provides medical and social support and helps lone individuals or families to build up a good network.

The team in Mortsel were also able to rely on invaluable help from a trainee who is studying to become a social worker and was once an unaccompanied minor himself.

## YIT Mechelen

At Youth in Transit Mechelen (16 places), it was once again a year full of wonderful encounters and various forms of collaboration. The team started building relations with local youth organisations. If they want to, young people at the centre can now play football every week.

A former trainee (and pedagogical science student) was offered a student job in Mechelen, where she spent a good while working together with the team.

## / Saeed is making big progress



Saeed (pictured left), with social worker Freek.



**Saeed found himself at YIT Mechelen when he was only 16 years old, and his is a real success story. At the age of 18, Saeed found accommodation**

**in Leuven, where a new chapter began for him. He now commutes from Leuven to Mechelen where he is currently studying and working. Saeed has never been handed anything on a plate, and has to work hard day-in, day-out. He holds a special place in the heart of everyone who meets him."**

## TVU and YIT Brussels

At TVU Brussels (47 places) and YIT Brussels (19 places) some of the accommodation was renovated last year. In Brussels it is also incredibly difficult to find housing, despite collaboration with 'solidary home-owners' and the presence of social rental agencies.

The team can look back on plenty of pleasant experiences with the young residents, including a visit by Saint Nicolas. The common room is frequently used for cooking or playing games.

In principle, residents at TVU are supposed to stay for no longer than six months. In practice, however, they often end up staying longer for various reasons. For example, before they leave they need to find their own accommodation. In addition, the residents are often in vulnerable situations: large families, people with disabilities, people who are not yet independent enough.

## Scherpenheuvel reception centre

The reception centre in Scherpenheuvel (165 places) received additional funding from Fedasil under the 'Neighbourhood Initiatives' (BIQ) programme to forge closer relationships with the local community and help the reception centre become better integrated. In 2023, there was a very successful open day. The centre also organised celebrations to mark the end of Ramadan, Christmas and Halloween. For young people aged between 12 and 18, the centre also works with the organisation Arktos to organise various activities.

Last year a new coordinator joined the reception centre, and a head caregiver was appointed. There are now a lot of Palestinian families among the residents, who were very worried about the situation in Gaza. With the help of Solentra, support groups were set up to help them better express and process their feelings.

Our colleagues in Scherpenheuvel are also reporting shortages on the housing market. They too have noticed that Fedasil is reluctant to allow residents to stay at the centre for longer if they are unable to quickly find their own accommodation.



**At the reception centre I share a small room with my mother, who requires care. When we arrived, I was worried about how the staff at the reception centre would treat refugees. But I soon realised that my worries were unfounded. They look after us really well here, especially my mother."**

Maryam from Afghanistan, who spent some time at the reception centre in Scherpenheuvel

## TVU and YIT Liège

At TVU in Liège major efforts were undertaken to improve team morale under difficult working conditions. The team spent a day with horses to get to know each other better, made possible thanks to a generous gesture from the event organiser.

In Liège, the teams worked with 59 unaccompanied minors last year. At TVU there were nine families, two single women and seven single men.

In the Saint-Walburge neighbourhood of Liège, a partnership was established with the local youth centre. This meant that young people from TVU and YIT were able to go and meet local youths of the same age. The young residents also went 'to camp' for a week thanks to an initiative run by Caritas International and the youth centre.

Thanks to collaboration with the Verviers welfare centre (CAW), it was also possible to freshen up the common room for the young residents.

The apartments for unaccompanied minors remained well occupied throughout the year. This was partly due to a shortage of places in the reception network. In addition, demand for YIT accommodation is growing. Among the various reception centres, Caritas International is renowned for taking excellent care of young people.

There are 41 and 40 places at TVU and YIT Liège, respectively.

The team in Liège noted that it was becoming harder to refer vulnerable refugees to other services, for example if they needed adapted housing or psychological support.

Youth in Shelter (YIS) Liège, which provides accommodation for 18 young people aged between 12 and 17, was able to convert an old garage in the garden into a fantastic sports room thanks to a donation. Sport is an amazing outlet for blowing off steam and staying healthy.

The residents at YIS Liège seem to be getting younger and younger. In the past, residents were mostly aged between 15 and 17; now the average age is between 12 and 14.

One of the caregivers at YIS is also doing some fantastic hands-on work. If one of the young residents breaks something or is given a penalty, the caregiver sits down with them and they repair something together. This helps the young person reflect on their behaviour, learn how to do minor repairs and gain self-confidence.

The team also includes a nurse who has adapted her working hours so she can be with the young residents in the evenings and at weekends, like the caregivers. She makes sure the minors at the centre stay healthy and teaches them techniques for relaxation, better managing their emotions and building relationships of trust. Having the nurse on board has significantly reduced the number of 'incidents'. Caritas International intentionally recruited the individual in question because of her specific profile. We are seeking additional funding to continue maintaining this dimension.

Like in other Caritas International reception centres, celebrations were also organised here to mark the end of Ramadan, Christmas and New Year. The non-profit Arc-en-Ciel gave the young residents the opportunity to spend a day at the Walibi theme park and sponsored the purchase of age-appropriate gifts.

In Liège, Caritas International also provided advice in relation to accommodation, socio-legal advice, reading and writing lessons, French lessons and social orientation. Three teams work day-in, day-out to make this innovative, multi-disciplinary 'IFAS' project a reality. IFAS stands for Interculturalité, Formation, Autonomie et Sociojuridique ('Interculturality, Training, Autonomy and Socio-Legal'). The name was chosen in 2023 to encompass various types of services. This activity has its own coordinator.

**What coordinator Christel has to say about IFAS: "We support people of foreign origin, most of whom are vulnerable in a number of ways. Some of them can't yet speak and/or read French. Others haven't been in Belgium for long, don't know how our country works and haven't yet built up a network here. Many live in unsanitary or unsuitable accommodation and are battling with red tape."**

All beneficiaries of our projects in Liège receive support via IFAS. IFAS also provides assistance for family reunification. This service is available to anyone of foreign origin, but in practice many requests have to be denied as there are simply too many. Demand is extremely high. It is currently not financially possible to expand the IFAS team.

In 2023, the Housing Promotion Association (APL) project in Charleroi came to an end, but a new, similar initiative was launched in Liège. It is also very difficult to find accommodation in Liège.

The staff who provide training were assessed by the Walloon government, and received compliments on the work they are doing.

A new employee joined the socio-legal service. The legal expert for this service has been doing a phenomenal job. In collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Brabantia social service (Brussels) and others, she was able to organise the repatriation of three children from Gaza who were returned to their Palestinian mother after they were abducted and taken to Gaza by their father.

## **Louvranges reception centre (Wavre)**

In Louvranges (78 places) a new concierge was recruited. Efforts have been made to allow the residents to be more independent and to make contact with various services themselves outside of office hours.

There was some excellent collaboration with the city of Wavre in September 2023 in connection with the Fête des citoyens du monde ('Festival of World Citizens'). This event ran over several days and was focused on the injustices experienced by migrants. The city of Wavre, the local youth centre and other stakeholders participated in the festival, together with our residents and team. It was an excellent opportunity for an exchange of views.

**Marie-Laure participated in art therapy workshops at the Logis de Louvranges: “To start with we just drew whatever came to mind. This taught us how to let go of our fatigue and stress and externalise it. Then we chose pictures that expressed what we were feeling, and explained to the others why we made certain choices. We also made collages. And we did Qigong and danced as a group.”**

Louvranges also relies on the help of around 15 volunteers who take care of a whole range of tasks: they help with homework, organise activities for the female residents and their children, provide transportation, help residents find housing and are ready for action when women go into labour.

In the crèche at the reception centre there is now a large multi-sensory environment, an initiative intended to stimulate children’s psychomotor skills and encourage them to use all their senses.

Most of the residents in Louvranges are from Sub-Saharan Africa. Many of the women staying there have been granted asylum in Belgium.

On 7 December 2023, the European Union Agency for Asylum, Fedasil and a European delegation visited the Logis de Louvranges.

## **Ransart reception centre (Charleroi)**

2023 was an extremely turbulent year for the reception centre in Ransart (125 places for adults and 26 for unaccompanied minors). At one point in time, it looked like the centre might have to be shut down. There were also a number of complaints from local residents.

The building in Ransart was put up for sale by the owner, but Caritas International was unable to purchase it because it would have needed to invest a great deal of money in renovation work. Closure seemed inevitable. Fortunately, Fedasil set out to find a solution and the building ended up being purchased by the company Inclusio. The new owner will now renovate the building, with Fedasil as the lessee and Caritas International as the operator of the reception centre. All the details of the new arrangement will be worked out in 2024.

The reception centre is located in the suburbs of Charleroi, and there are a lot of houses nearby. The staff are doing all they can to ensure the centre is properly integrated into the local area.

Despite this, the various happenings took a great toll on the staff in Ransart. Nonetheless, the team and the residents made it through and carried on believing that things would work out in the end. They were able to end the year on a positive note. Ransart is hoping for a more settled 2024 so that it can get on top of all its projects.



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# Social programmes

## Support towards independence

Our social programmes involve four different services: the social service (front-line work, family reunification, visits to people in detention centres, voluntary return and collaboration with the Bordet information point), the integration service (resettlement and community sponsorship, counselling for extremely vulnerable refugees in Leuven), the guardians service (guardianship, help desk for guardians, Xtra MENA) and the reintegration service for individuals returning to their home countries from Belgium or other EU countries.

The staff involved in all of these activities work hard on a daily basis to enforce the rights of people with a vulnerable profile. These rights may seem self-evident, but on more than one occasion it has been necessary to fight for people’s ability to exercise them. Caritas International is doing everything it can to help those receiving support get on the right track, whilst always respecting them as human beings.

In 2023, we launched the InfoKiosk BXL pilot project where migrants in Belgium who have been granted some form of residence status can get information about their social rights and be referred on to the correct services. We published a revised edition of our report on unaccompanied minors in transit. The reintegration team supported nearly 1100 people who were returning to their country of origin from Belgium. The integration team was closely involved in a European conference about community sponsorship in Brussels and founded three new reception groups.

Caritas International and its staff boast unique expertise. They also try to put this expertise to good use by sparking public debate and by informing the competent bodies about the impact of their policy on our target groups.

## Social service

In 2023, the Caritas International social service handled 1983 cases involving 3411 people. Almost 1100 of the cases involved voluntary return. 565 of the cases involved front-line work. 67% of the people who called upon our services were men. In most cases these were single men. 98 different nationalities were represented among the users of the social services, with Brazilians being the most common. Peru also featured in the top 10.

### SOCIAL SERVICE USERS (TOP 10)

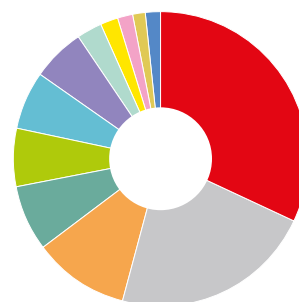
	2023	2022
Brazil	611	427
Syria	92	94
Belgium	86	85
Afghanistan	82	71
Colombia	75	69
Morocco	68	81
Guinea	65	64
Romania	58	77
El Salvador	53	54
Peru	47	0

In our front-line work we noticed that increasing digitalisation is continuing to lead to social exclusion and that persistent debts are weighing heavy on our clients. The war in Ukraine and the energy crisis were not without consequences either. A growing number of beneficiaries are struggling with mental health problems, which sometimes makes it hard to provide adequate support. In these circumstances, it is often necessary to provide intensive assistance via a number of different disciplines, but in practice that is not always possible.

Our front-line staff dealt with 565 cases in 2023. We received 100 questions on average each month, either via telephone or email. Most of the questions we received were about residency, government services, accommodation, daily life, finances or health. Government services have been difficult to access on more than one occasion. With respect to accommodation, the entire social sector is feeling the severity of the crisis; people seeking rental housing are faced with limited options, high rents, apartments in poor condition and discrimination.

### MOST COMMON PROBLEMS

- Residency: **576**
- Government services: **399**
- Accommodation: **194**
- Daily life: **129**
- Finances: **115**
- Other: **114**
- Health: **105**
- Family relationships: **49**
- Social security: **38**
- Studies/training: **28**
- Material support (\*): **27**
- Employment: **26**



(\*): Including food aid, clothing, baby items, furniture and wheelchairs.



Family reunification is one issue that is certainly a concern among our clients. The specialist help desk received around 360 queries a month on this subject. In the last four months of 2023, this help desk had to suspend its services due to a lack of staff. 204 new cases were opened in relation to family reunification. In addition to providing individual support, we also organise monthly group information sessions.

81% of those requesting family reunification are men or boys. Most of the requesting individuals held Afghan, Syrian, Belgian, Guinean or Somali nationality. In most places it is not possible for family members who need to apply for a visa to go directly to the Belgian embassy. Part of the procedure has been digitalised. Sometimes they have to wait a long time before getting an appointment at a visa office.

Family reunification has become particularly complicated for Afghans since the Taliban seized power. People applying for an Afghan passport sometimes have to wait one or two years before it arrives. Usually, whether or not their case gets handled quickly is dependent on whether they can pay off the right people. Once their passport finally arrives, they have to apply for a visa for Pakistan or Iran where they can go to the Belgian embassy for the next steps in the procedure. That has become extremely difficult, too. Intermediaries organising Pakistani visas charge huge sums of money for their services. This forces many families to travel to Pakistan illegally. Often, they are unable to board an aircraft to Europe because they have crossed the border without a visa.

In Iran, too, the procedure is far from simple. Anyone requesting family reunification must demonstrate that they have a certain level of income. In 2020 this amount stood at EUR 1555 per month. However, it has since increased significantly to EUR 1969 in January 2023, which is equivalent to 120% of the living wage. This development is making it impossible for some people to bring their family members over to Belgium.

In the area of voluntary returns, the number of cases handled by the social service rose from 851 in 2022 to 1087 in 2023. Many of those requesting voluntary return are undocumented male migrants who are being exploited in our country by their employers. When they do not get paid, they are unable to file a complaint. Organisations like Fairwork Belgium can do little to help if victims of exploitation are unwilling to report a bad employer. Brazil is the country to which the most people are currently returning. Pakistan and Armenia are new additions to the top 10.

The social service also keeps an eye on the situation of people in detention centres. Its staff visited 121 people (of 32 nationalities) in Steenokkerzeel and Holsbeek. Those they visited in Steenokkerzeel (repatriation centre) mostly came from Afghanistan, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Guinea. In Holsbeek the individuals concerned were mainly women from Brazil, Somalia, Colombia and Burundi. Europeans or individuals with European residence documents are often detained, too.

Caritas International has come together with a number of other organisations to form MOVE, a coalition that aims to raise awareness about the fate of people held in these detention centres. MOVE is working to influence Belgian policy on this matter. Volunteers who have been officially recognised by the Belgian Immigration Department pay visits to detention centres.

## Working towards a more inclusive society: InfoKiosk BXL



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The InfoKiosk BXL started running in 2023 at our head office on Rue de la Charité in the Saint-Josse neighbourhood. InfoKiosk BXL is an easy-to-access service for newcomers with various questions about life in Brussels. InfoKiosk BXL's services are targeted at people from outside of the European Union who are legally residing in our country and are looking for help in the Brussels Capital Region. The people who make use of this service come with a wide array of questions. Most of the questions pertain to residency documents, accommodation, family reunification and employment.

**“InfoKiosk BXL aims to supplement existing structures: it is a place where people seeking social support in Brussels can go to get information or a referral. The support provided by InfoKiosk BXL is extremely wide-ranging. The questions it handles include how to get a driving license, how to find a doctor or psychologist, how to enrol at school or how to make an appointment with the municipal authorities.”**

InfoKiosk BXL is planned to run for one year. It is affiliated with the European AccessIN project in which organisations, local authorities and universities in Belgium, Germany, Spain and Hungary are participating. The project is receiving financial support from the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). The mission of AccessIN is to make society more inclusive by fostering cooperation between civil society, government institutions and migrants. Against this backdrop, InfoKiosk BXL not only aims to better identify the needs of its target group but also wants to gather more insights into the existing services provided in our country's capital. During the first six months the focus

was on launching the project, spreading the word about it and forging partnerships with other organisations in Brussels. We offer in-person appointments and also work via telephone or WhatsApp. More than 170 people have already taken the opportunity to contact InfoKiosk BXL. We also organised our first group activity. In addition, we met with more than 80 organisations, which in four cases resulted in a close partnership. Since December 2023, we have added an extra drop-in centre at 22Rogier, the social office of the Schaerbeek Public Centre for Social Welfare.

## Training and supporting guardians

Caritas International has 13 guardians and 1 intercultural mediator who work to help unaccompanied foreign minors (UFMs). The guardians in the UFM team provide training and support to French-speaking guardians working for the Federal Public Service for Justice. In September 2022, this contract was extended for a further four years.

The services available to guardians include a help desk that can be contacted by telephone or email. In 2023, the help desk responded to 576 queries from guardians. We were also involved in providing basic training at the Guardianship Service of the Federal Public Service for Justice, helping to prepare 110 new guardians. Our UFM team also organised 16 coaching sessions, and personally monitored 41 difficult cases.

And that's not all. We organised 27 training sessions on procedures, reception, health, talking about emotions and sexuality, problems at school, reaching adulthood and other topics. Support groups for guardians in Liège, Brussels, Charleroi and Namur met 4 or 5 times last year; 76 guardians attended these meetings.

## Xtra MENA, for minors 'in transit'

Xtra MENA is the project through which we aim to inform and advise unaccompanied minors 'in transit'. These young people receive information about protection and the systems in other countries, and are referred on to other services where necessary. We also provide information and support to front-line staff working with these young people. In addition, we make proposals about how to improve pre-reception and better support these minors.

Most of the minors 'in transit' want to go to the United Kingdom. They do not really intend to stay in Belgium for long. Most of these minors avoid contacting the authorities and do not request international protection here. They try to get by on their own, and often end up in contact with smuggling networks. These young people are extremely mistrustful, especially of the government.

However, it is still really important to reach out to them and ensure they are getting the right information. We do that, for example, at the 'humanitarian hub' day centre in Brussels,

at the Dubrucq centre run by Samusocial, at the AMRAN centre run by the Plateforme citoyenne (Citizens' Platform), at the Sister House run by the Plateforme citoyenne and at the Casa Tamam refugee shelter. At our drop-in centres in a number of locations we find out about what these minors need and refer them to other organisations. It is extremely important to build a relationship of trust with this target group.

**Jeanne from Caritas International: "Some minors arrive in our country after passing through Libya. That country is well known for being hell on earth for minors. Migrants are held there in detention centres where they live in inhumane conditions. Later on, they pass through Italy and France. Other minors have been in Europe for a while and attempt to get to the United Kingdom from lorry parks in Belgium. Others travel back and forth between Calais and Brussels. They come to get some rest in Brussels before heading back to the French coast."**

## More arrivals of boys from Eritrea and Ethiopia

In 2023 we met 368 minors, almost all of them boys. We saw 60% of them on multiple occasions. More than half of these minors originated from Eritrea, with 15% originating from Ethiopia. However, there were also youths from Morocco, Sudan, Afghanistan, Algeria, Cameroon, DR Congo, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Syria, Yemen and other countries.

More than three quarters of the minors we encountered were 16 or 17 years old. 81% of them had not applied for international protection in Belgium; sometimes they did later change their minds and applied for protection. 19% of these minors were going through procedures, and came to talk to us about specific problems.

Last year, we also organised training sessions regarding minors in transit on behalf of Samusocial and the Belgian Red Cross. We participated in cross-border working groups and held exchanges with other organisations. Visits to Calais and Dunkirk helped us gain a better understanding of what is going on at the French coast. We also took a closer look at the United Kingdom, the country most of the minors want to get to.

In addition, our team wrote a report on unaccompanied minors in transit and the importance of pre-reception and support for these young people. This was a revised version of a report of the same title published in 2021. Since May 2023, minors have been able to spend three months at Dubrucq or AMRAN before having to officially register themselves. This is great progress, but there is much more

that needs to be done. We hope that the ongoing efforts will start to have a lasting impact, and that new initiatives will be developed too. This will make it possible to provide better and more tailored support for these minors.

## Professional resettlement support

In the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Caritas International integration team is seeking sustainable solutions for people arriving in our country via legal means. The team members are endeavouring to give refugees the tools they need to get off to a good start in our society. They specialise in supporting refugees who have arrived in Belgium via resettlement or another legal migration route. We take a multi-faceted approach, with a key role played by individuals with personal experience of these situations, working in collaboration with a broad array of partners.

Our exchange programme for resettled refugees is entitled 'Peer 2 Peer'. It allows resettled refugees who have not been in Belgium for long to share their experiences, insights and questions in a confidential environment and in the presence of others who have been through similar things, 'ambassadors' and intercultural employees from Caritas International who act as facilitators.

The Belgian resettlement programme celebrated its 10th anniversary, although challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic and the reception crisis did mean it has had to be suspended for long periods. The programme was relaunched in 2023, meaning we were able to start offering our services again in early 2024.

In 2023 we also focused on strengthening and publicising community sponsorship as an effective and sustainable approach to the reception and integration of newcomers. Community sponsorship relies on a team of motivated local volunteers, professional and multi-faceted support by our team and national deployment under the aegis of Fedasil. It provides a supplementary framework for allowing vulnerable newcomers access to information, accommodation and an informal network. These are crucial building blocks in their attempts to build an independent life for themselves here in Belgium.

**Bart is a volunteer for the community sponsorship programme: "We do more than just provide practical support. Our reception group is always there to listen and to provide a hug or a pat on the back. You can't expect official bodies like the municipal administration or the OCMW to form a close relationship with a refugee or family of refugees. But community sponsorship can provide those kinds of relationships."**

## European conference

Community sponsorship has been around in Belgium for some years now. There are similar projects ongoing in other European countries, and we are able to share our experiences with these in the Qualitative Sponsorship Network run by the organisation Share. We were also able to share our experiences at the first European Refugee Sponsorship Convention, a conference that took place in Brussels in spring 2023. This was an opportunity to raise awareness about this approach, where volunteers and resettled individuals could talk about their experience of community sponsorship.

In 2023, three community sponsorship cases were successfully concluded. Three new reception groups committed to providing a year's worth of support to resettled refugees. We are seeing growing interest from all over the country in launching new initiatives in the coming years.

In Leuven, the community sponsorship programme is working in partnership with the EU Passworld project to support refugees who are studying. As part of a European alliance, KU Leuven, Fedasil and Caritas International are working together to find a new safe and sustainable migration route for refugee students to enter Belgium. This led to the arrival of the first three students in September 2023. They are continuing their Master's degrees at KU Leuven, after which they will start building their careers from Belgium. We also support a group of volunteers who help the students find their feet in the city, with a focus on good studying habits and participation in broader society. To this end we work with civil society partners in Leuven and the university itself. In 2024 we intend to continue developing this innovative approach, and hope to launch similar initiatives in other Belgian university cities.

## Vulnerable families in Leuven

Many people struggle to find their feet in our society. This may be because of their particular circumstances, setbacks they experience or their complex family situation. They may feel overwhelmed by the scale of the challenges. Together with the Leuven OCMW, Caritas International has been providing comprehensive support to such vulnerable families over the past year. This requires a culture-sensitive approach and an atmosphere of trust. The staff accompany these people throughout their programme, attempt to tease out any issues and look for workable solutions in line with the needs of each family member. Depending on each family's circumstances, we rely on the support of a local network that helps us to achieve lasting results. In 2023 we provided 17 families with support in this way.

## Reintegration: almost 1100 people given support with voluntary return

Our reintegration team works hard every day to help migrants who decide to voluntarily return to their country of origin. They receive support throughout the entire process; this starts in Belgium, where there is close collaboration between Caritas International, Fedasil and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The programme helps people prepare for the journey as well as providing reintegration support once they have arrived in their country of origin. We feed any information we receive back to Fedasil, so that the programme can be improved in the future where necessary.

Since April 2022 we have not only been providing reintegration support to people who return voluntarily from Belgium, but we have also been working at European level on the Joint Reintegration Services (JRS) project. Together with our partners we now also offer our services to people returning from other EU countries. There were 3200 such people in 2023.

Each staff member in the reintegration team is responsible for one or several regions. This means that our colleagues are able to build a good knowledge of the context and recent developments in the countries for which they are responsible thanks to good collaboration with our partners. In the preparatory phase of the return process, our colleagues meet with the individuals who are considering voluntary return. The number of meetings depends on the potential returnee's profile and needs. While receiving support the person in question can request information about their options and their needs and expectations will be discussed. Our staff then feed this back to their partner in the country the person wants to return to. If necessary, our colleagues can make initial contact with the partner organisation together with the potential returnee before they depart.

Once an individual has returned to their country of origin, they will be put in touch with a staff member of the local partner organisation who will provide support for the next year. Depending on the wants and needs of that person, this support might involve helping them start up economic activity, undergo training or rent accommodation. There is also support available for people with medical issues, and psychosocial counselling is also available in some regions. Our staff stay in contact with the partner organisations and help monitor the situation where necessary.

In 2023, our team organised support in 684 cases involving 1083 people. They also visited partner organisations, organised training sessions and held exchanges. For example, the team hosted its partners from Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Albania, Kosovo, Ukraine and Serbia in Brussels in June. In October, a partner week took place in Ecuador with colleagues from Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Ecuador and Peru. Our staff also went on an observation mission to see our reintegration partners in Tunisia, Moldova and Albania. As part of the JRS project, we provided training in various EU Member States, including Italy, Croatia and Bulgaria. In Prague, a reintegration conference took place which was attended by most of the organisations involved in the JRS.

We also renewed our efforts to ensure provision of correct and complete information. Information sessions were held for migrants and front-line services. We also developed communications material like podcasts and flyers.

**Jelena works with returnees at Caritas Serbia: "Having stable accommodation is essential to successful reintegration. If you're always couch-surfing with different family members, how on earth are you supposed to find a stable job or keep your children in school?"**



Talking about returning.

# Our organisation

## At the service of others

### Personnel and welfare

In collaboration with the Communication and Mobilisation department, we introduced a new system in 2023 for celebrating staff members who have reached a certain number of years of service. These employees receive a special message and a personalised gift.

We have also introduced a better policy for granting unpaid leave.

### Soft HR

In connection with our HR project, which is being worked on by coordinators on a voluntary basis, we discussed interventions that will help us to better meet the expectations of teams on the ground and improve the HR support these teams receive.

A new three-year training plan has been developed. We continued to provide training to our front-line workers on how to deal with aggression. There were also training sessions on prevention and safety as well as how to manage a team.

We invested in an IT tool (SD Worx) that will allow us to better manage requests for training.

Finally, we introduced new indicators to better monitor and reduce staff turnover and absenteeism.

### Payroll administration

We adapted our administration to new statutory requirements on reporting reimbursement of expenses on payslips.

We looked into options for a new tool that will help us improve our planning in the reception centres and structures.

Together with our colleagues in the International Development, Finance, Communication and Reintegration departments – who often have to travel for work – we developed a policy for daily allowances (per diems).

We also reflected on and took action with respect to improving the functioning of the HR department, for example when it comes to classifying and revising documents.



*A good team spirit is important to get a lot of work done.*

## Social dialogue

As a result of our social dialogue, we introduced a policy for our employees over the age of 45. Now, anyone over the age of 45 will be able to take extra holiday.

We also added the finishing touches to a policy regarding the right to disconnect. In addition, we launched the procedure for workplace elections, which will be held in May 2024.

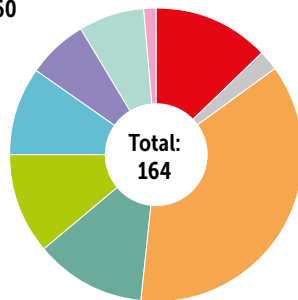
## Employees as of 31 december 2023

The figures concern only the staff of Caritas International in Belgium. Some projects in Belgium are implemented in collaboration with our privileged partners Caritas Flanders, Caritas Wallonia, CAW Brabantia and their staff. Abroad, we work with local partners and have representation in a limited number of priority countries: Burundi, DR Congo, Niger, Ethiopia, Uganda, Bosnia for the Balkans and Palestine. For some projects in Belgium and abroad, we also pay for the services of people external to the organisation.

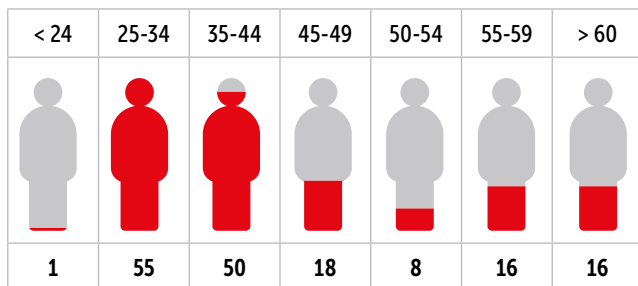
### NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES BY DEPARTMENT

- Logistics & Real Estate Management: 21
- Management Team: 4
- Asylum & Migration / Reception: 60
- Asylum & Migration / Social Programmes: 20
- Communication & Mobilisation: 18
- Finance: 16
- Emergency Aid & Development: 11
- Human Resources: 12
- IT & ERP Programme: 2

**Total number of employees: 164**



### NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES BY AGE



## Ethics and integrity

Anyone who has reason to doubt the integrity of Caritas can proceed with a report via the address [ombudsman@caritas.be](mailto:ombudsman@caritas.be) or by telephone on +32 476 47 23 23.

Our ethical charter as well as all the measures taken in terms of ethics and protection can be consulted on the site: [www.caritasinternational.be/ethiek](http://www.caritasinternational.be/ethiek).

For our interventions abroad, procedures for handling complaints have also been put in place with our local partners and the communities concerned.

## Complaint registry 2023

26 notifications were registered in 2023:

- 24 via ombudsman@caritas.be and 2 via telephone on +32 476 47 23 23.
- 1 complaint concerned a misunderstanding following communication from an external partner.
- 1 complaint concerned our service. In response, we made a change to our procedures.
- 2 of the notifications were not relevant in the context of ethics and integrity.
- 2 of the notifications contained major inconsistencies, and as such no result could be achieved.
- 3 of the notifications concerned the processing time for files.
- 3 of the notifications concerned the behaviour of residents in our reception centres.
- 3 of the notifications had nothing to do with the activities of Caritas International; as such, we referred them to the relevant bodies.
- 3 whistle-blowers flagged situations that required further attention. In these cases, action was taken by the relevant department heads and the Ethical Committee.
- 4 of the notifications concerned other legal entities in the Caritas network; as such, we referred them to the relevant bodies.

In the case of four of the notifications we were unable to meet the notifier's request due to unrealistic expectations or because our organisation was not competent to decide on the relevant matters.

# Communication & Mobilisation

## See, judge, act

The risk of potential closure of the reception centre in Ransart, the persistent reception crisis causing people to end up on the streets, the enormous human suffering in the wake of the earthquakes in Türkiye, Syria and Morocco, the conflicts in Ukraine, Armenia and Gaza: in 2023 there were plenty of crises to which the Communication & Mobilisation team had to respond. We took both internal and external action in this regard. The Education team implemented two school projects and broadened its service offering. The project 'Other Talk – Teaching Migration' and the partnership with School Zonder Racisme ('School Without Racism') were brought to a conclusion; unfortunately the School Zonder Racisme programme will not be continuing, which is very unfortunate since we had such an excellent partnership.

With respect to advocacy, we participated in the Global Refugee Forum, co-authored analyses together with our international partners and entered into dialogue with bodies like the DGD, the cabinet of the Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration, Nicole de Moor, and the cabinet of the Minister for Development Cooperation, Caroline Gennez.

We raised more than 4.2 million euros through our fundraising campaigns. These funds went to our structural projects and partnerships. The major crises of 2023 resulted in a major wave of generosity, with almost 4.5 million euros in funds raised. These donations were mainly related to our humanitarian response to the war in Ukraine and the earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria. An amount of 1.28 million euros was due to income from the campaign of the 12-12 consortium on Türkiye and Syria. We will use the balance to

set aside a provision that we will use for related emergency aid projects in the financial year 2024.

## Spotlight on Belgium

When does a crisis stop being a crisis and become 'the new normal'? Is there a reception crisis, or is it rather a crisis of political will or political impotence? And why is the government failing to provide all applicants for international protection with that which they are entitled to: a place in a reception centre? These are all questions we reflected on in 2023. The answers to these questions will vary, depending on who you speak to. As will the answers to the question of how to overcome the challenges we have been facing for years now.

Caritas International is doing its bit to help find solutions in collaboration with our partner organisations. What were the most important initiatives in 2023?

At the start of the year a working group was set up involving humanitarian and other civil society organisations like Doctors Without Borders, Doctors of the World, Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen (Flanders Council for Refugees), Ciré, the Brussels Citizens' Platform for supporting refugees and Samusocial. The working group met every two weeks. Its agenda featured operational updates, political strategy and awareness-raising actions. In June and November, we published two analyses together with this working group containing our key findings and an



A session in the context of Other Talk.

overview of what is needed on the ground. These analyses were intended to demonstrate to policymakers how serious the situation is, specifically when it comes to the growing needs among people who are not given a place in a reception centre. In this context, Caritas is focusing on monitoring the situation of unaccompanied minors who register themselves and want to apply for international protection. We are also focusing on protecting them and helping them find a place in a reception centre.

We also contributed to discussions around and helped implement two campaigns: the campaign run together with Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen and others under the slogan *Solidaire Straat* ('Streets in Solidarity') and the CNC-D-11.11.11 campaign *Communes hospitalières* ('Welcoming Municipalities') which was relaunched. Two different campaigns, but with the same objective: to raise awareness among local residents and lobby local policymakers. Why? Because we believe that there is a simple short-term solution: implement the distribution plan! This will require both local solidarity and political will – a twin commitment whereby we firmly believe that one will influence the other, and which we once again worked towards this year in connection with the *Solidaire Steden en Gemeenten* ('Cities and Municipalities in Solidarity') initiative and the Other Talk Goes Local project.

## Spotlight on the rest of the world

The reception crisis in Belgium should not overshadow the fact that the vast majority of refugees in the world are being hosted by countries in the Global South, including in partner countries of Caritas International like Uganda and Niger. These large host countries find themselves confronted with short-term support and diminished international attention.

**“At Caritas we believe in taking a different approach. Instead of violence and push-backs we would like to see humane reception facilities for people arriving in Europe. We are advocating for a welcoming Europe that brings people together and promotes social cohesion and inclusion instead of polarising societies. We choose solidarity instead of rejection and building walls.”**

These observations and challenges were at the top of the agenda during the second Global Refugee Forum that took place in Geneva at the end of 2023. In the run-up to this Forum, we worked with other members of the Caritas network to raise awareness among both Belgian and international policymakers about their responsibilities with respect to these challenges. The Caritas network believes it is essential that we find sustainable solutions for refugees and displaced persons in Belgium, elsewhere in Europe, in the Middle East and in the Global South. It is encouraging to note that Belgium committed to ensuring better involvement

of refugee populations in its development programmes at the Forum. If this new approach is accompanied by tangible actions and rights-based advocacy, it will be possible to translate purely humanitarian actions into 'nexus' strategies with a greater focus on social inclusion of refugees and long-term resilience.

The Caritas network itself took advantage of the Forum to announce its commitments with respect to a locally led response, strengthening local partners, adapting their financing and calling for effective participation of local stakeholders in policy relating to forced displacement. The pledges that were made will further boost the network's call for international humanitarian stakeholders (like the Belgian government) to meet their own commitments and give added weight to local organisations – be that Caritas or refugee-led organisations – in a more direct, effective and equitable manner.

## Education



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The Education team helps teachers address issues like migration, refugees and diversity in the classroom. How does it do that? Through training, provision of a digital teaching platform, free tools for lessons and collaboration with schools. Pupils enjoy talking about these subjects and sometimes have very outspoken opinions about them, which illustrates why it is so important to support teachers in this regard.

In 2023, 66 teachers took part in our training sessions either virtually or in person. More than 350 teachers used our teaching materials. The digital 'serious game' Walk in My Shoes ([www.walk-in-my-shoes.be](http://www.walk-in-my-shoes.be)) allowed more than 16,500 pupils to follow in the footsteps of a refugee. Almost 600 pupils attended our workshops in schools. In addition, around 90 volunteers from various organisations received further training.

Around 180 pupils participated in one of our two school projects. Via workshops, meet-and-greets and refugee testimonials, we worked with pupils and teachers to help them develop a better understanding of and gain more insights into the causes of migration and the journey refugees make. At the Cardijnschool in Anderlecht we worked



together with School Zonder Racisme to run a project that enabled pupils with their own migrant or refugee story to talk more openly about it. At the Institut de la Vierge Fidèle in Schaerbeek, we revealed the links between migration, conflicts and natural resources together with our partners Commission Justice & Paix and the Belgian Red Cross.

2023 was also the year in which we concluded our project 'Other Talk – Teaching Migration'. 415 (aspiring) teachers, educational staff and members of school management teams have already started using the digital teaching platform. Lecturers in higher education institutions also made use of the platform, allowing their students to take a deeper look at the subject of migration and diversity. We presented the project at a number of workshops and presentations which were attended by more than 250 people who are active in the field of education.



*For my pupils, Walk in My Shoes allowed them to better understand the situation in certain countries. Some of the pupils were really shocked that the situation was so bad, and realised how lucky we are here.”*

A teacher at a vocational education institute in Kortrijk

## Fundraising

2023 was a year marked by natural disasters and conflict. We called upon our donors to open their hearts to survivors of these crises. Fortunately many of them responded to our call for support for vulnerable people, including victims of the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, refugee families, unaccompanied minors in Belgium, and survivors of the earthquakes in Syria, Turkey and Morocco. Nearly 4.5 million euros were raised, including 1.28 million euros from the Syria-Turkey 1212 campaign.

4.2 million euros were gathered for our long-term projects and our partnerships. Climate warming is threatening food security for subsistence farmers, for example in Ethiopia. We are working with them to ensure access to better water



© Johanna de Tessières / Caritas International

sources and protect the soil. They are getting down to work with the tools and seeds they receive. Help was needed for the most vulnerable refugees in Uganda, most of whom come from East Congo. We raised EUR 373,879 to this end.

Caritas International received fantastic support from its donors. In 2023, we raised another EUR 1.52 million to help tackle the crisis in Ukraine. The Emergency Aid Fund, which is intended to provide immediate humanitarian aid in emergency situations, was topped up by EUR 34,679. We also received EUR 32,573 in donations for refugees. This money will be used, for example, to support unaccompanied minors who have sought refuge in our country to live a more autonomous life. The Hunger Fund received EUR 146,749 in donations.

Regarding legacy donations, after payment of inheritance taxes (4,722,208.81 euros), net revenues amounted to 1,510,437 euros.

## Communications

In 2023, the expertise of the Communications team was called upon on multiple occasions. Sometimes it was necessary to respond rapidly to crisis situations. Other times the team did its best to raise awareness around the projects being implemented by Caritas International.

Caritas International's work was mentioned 219 times in the press by a broad range of Dutch-language, French-language and international media outlets. Frequently recurring topics were the reception crisis and the shortage of places for unaccompanied minors, the earthquakes in various countries and the humanitarian impact of the war in Ukraine. Community sponsorship also received a fair amount of attention in the press. Colleagues with expertise from our social programmes and from the International Cooperation department were regularly quoted.

We also endeavoured to expand our digital audience, both on the website and on social media. This year we noted an 8% increase in our reach on Facebook, Instagram, X and LinkedIn. We addressed a number of current affairs topics and organised campaigns in support of the community sponsorship project and various donation campaigns.

Within our own organisation, our staff were able to read 102 articles on our intranet CariNet about the projects being undertaken by all the teams and about crisis situations. They were also able to participate in four editions of our Midi-Caritas meetings, where we addressed important subjects like the work being done at Logis de Louvranges and Caritas International's new environmental policy. There were also monthly workshops where participants could familiarise themselves with the Teams and Viva Engage tools. 92 of our employees participated in these workshops.

# A strategy for our 'common home': our environmental policy



We desperately need to take a different approach to our relationship with the planet. After all, our planet is the source of all life.

The cries for help from our international partners and the survivors we are supporting in a number of regions make it all the more clear how severe the decline in our environment is and how great an impact global warming is having. These phenomena are having a disproportionately large impact on the poorest communities and populations, despite the fact that they bear the least responsibility for the disruption of the climate and have little to no means available to deal with the consequences and prepare for future disasters.

Caritas International draws its inspiration from the second encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*. This encyclical talks about protecting our 'common home'. The papal document describes the environmental crisis we are facing and draws links with overconsumption and the prevailing models of economic development. 'The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world.'

This issue is a priority for the Pope, the Catholic church and all faithful. It is also of importance for scientists and many citizens. Let us respond to the call to better protect our planet and restore our common home.

Caritas International has witnessed first-hand the devastating impact of the prevailing development model on all life on earth. Our organisation is committed to systematically assessing the environmental and societal impact of the choices it makes. It endeavours to adapt its behaviour and practices in order to improve sustainability and ensure greater respect of the environment.

## Rules of thumb for our action plans

Each Caritas International team or project must bear in mind three rules of thumb when drawing up their action plans for 2024–2026:

- > We must **analyse** our environmental and societal impact in order to set priorities and measure progress. We must also endeavour to set a good example and promote good practices. When setting our goals for the coming year, we must map out the baseline situation and investigate what the most efficient avenues and solutions are. For this reason, we are now organising energy audits for our buildings, for example.
- > In order to better **protect** the environment we must reduce our environmental footprint through the choices we make when designing projects, getting around, using energy, making purchases and investing. What has already been done in this area? New rules have been introduced for international travel (within Europe travel by train is preferred); we are raising awareness about using less energy in our offices and accommodations; we are changing how we dispose of waste; we ensure all purchases are green and fair trade; we are optimising the heating systems in our buildings and we are promoting 'soft mobility' in cities. Caritas International has also been awarded the label 'Ecodynamic Business' by Brussels Environment in recognition of the efforts of all our teams over the past years.
- > We also want to **'regenerate'**. When developing its activities, Caritas International aims to contribute to regeneration of the environment as much as possible, for example via agro-ecology. We also focus on enhancing social cohesion. The five-year programme COHERENCE, which you can read more about elsewhere in this report, is aimed at increasing communities' resilience so that they are better prepared for economic shocks and climate change. This programme also aims to encourage greater solidarity. The environmental problems facing the planet are inextricably linked to issues such as social justice and human rights.

# Asylum & Migration programmes in Belgium

31 December 2023

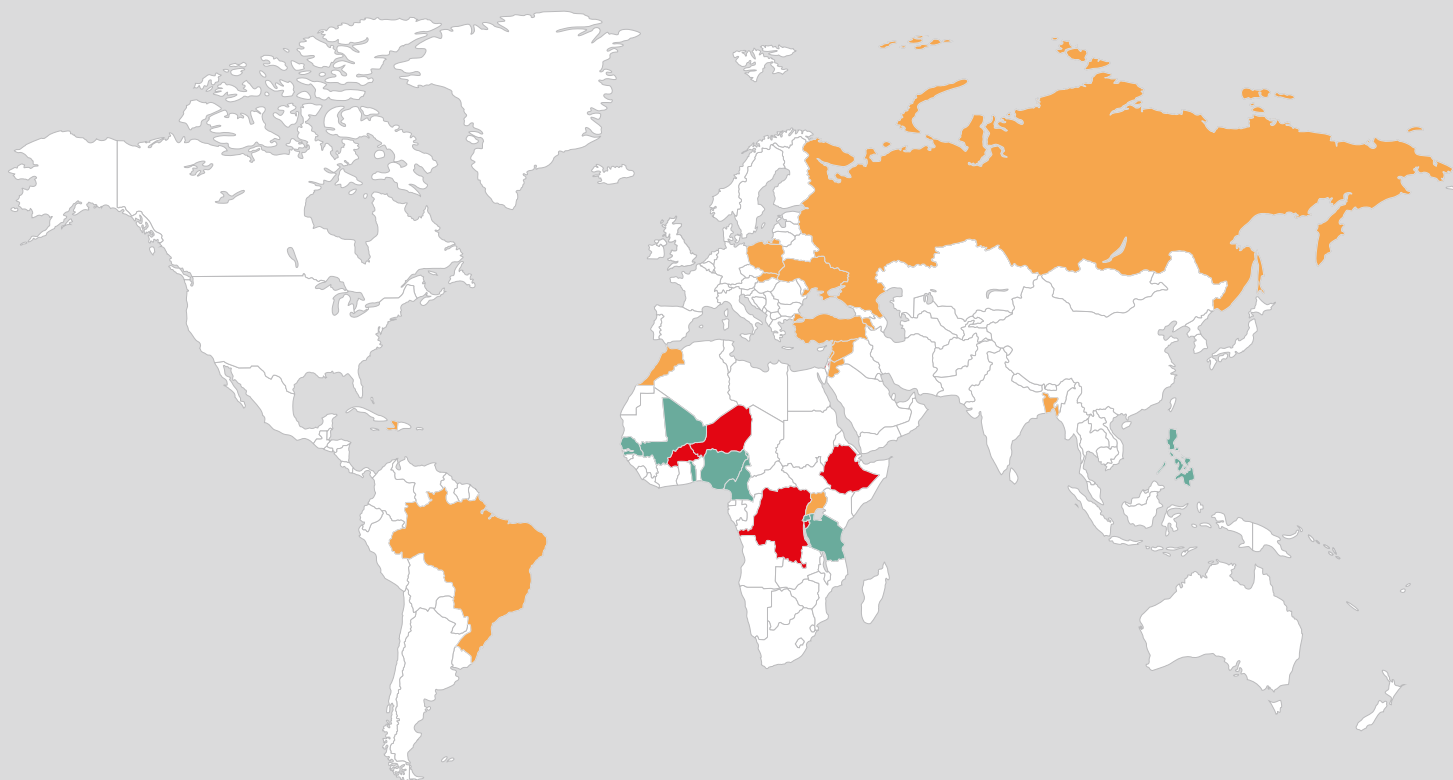
PROJECT TITLE	SPECIFICITY	DONOR
<b>TAILOR-MADE RECEPTION AND SUPPORT - APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION</b>		
Logis de Louvranges	Single women with or without children. Grouped apartments.	Fedasil Support from Wavre municipality
Reception centre Scherpenheuvel (1)	Families, singles, people with disabilities or psycho-medical problems.	Fedasil
Reception centre Ransart (2)	Families, singles and unaccompanied minors.	Fedasil
Youth in Shelter Liège (2)	Reception structure for unaccompanied minors aged 14-18 years.	Aide à la Jeunesse (Wallonia-Brussels Federation)
Health care Antwerpen	Applicants for international protection with medical problems. Family homes.	Ciré
<b>RECEPTION AND GUIDANCE TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE FOR PEOPLE WITH A RESIDENCE STATUS</b>		
TVU Brussels, Liège, Antwerp	Vulnerable refugees.	Fedasil
Youth in Transit Liège, Brussels, Mechelen	Unaccompanied minors.	Fedasil, via Ciré
High Care Antwerp	Refugees with serious medical problems.	Fedasil
<b>INTEGRATION</b>		
Local integration initiative Liège	Literacy, socio-legal permanence, interculturality.	Walloon region
APL Liège (2)	Support in finding a home for those who are poorly housed or who find it difficult to find a dignified home.	Walloon region
<b>SOCIAL PROGRAMMES</b>		
Reintegration after voluntary return	Pre-departure counseling. Support of partners in supervising reintegration projects. · From Belgium. · From another European country (JRS).	Fedasil, AMIF Belgium, European funds, via Frontex
First line service (3)	Socio-legal services, counselling in the event of family reunification, counselling in the event of voluntary return, visits to detention centres. Guardianships of UAMs – help desk for guardians - guidance of unaccompanied minors in transit.	Partnership with the Caritas branch of the Brabantia social service COCOM (via Brabantia) Ministry of Justice Fedasil
Integral guidance refugees Leuven	One-year psychosocial counselling for refugee families with extra vulnerabilities.	City of Leuven
Social service for foreign students and trainees	Supporting students on limited visas, enrolled in a university or in a college.	Orval and Scourmont Fund
Guardianship (3)	Guardianship of unaccompanied minors and support for guardians.	Ministry of Justice Fedasil
Community Sponsorship	Assisting host groups in the reception of resettled Syrian refugees.	Fedasil
Resettlement: Peer 2 Peer	Collective activities for resettled refugees, training ambassadors, facebook group.	Fedasil
Financial support	Exceptionally, a loan is granted for family reunification and rental guarantees.	Own resources

In Belgium, some projects are carried out in collaboration with one of our privileged partners: Caritas Flanders (1), Caritas Wallonia (2) and CAW Brabantia (3).

# International cooperation programmes: map

	AFRICA	ASIA	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST	SOUTH AMERICA
<b>DEVELOPMENT</b>	Cameroon* Mali* Nigeria* Rwanda* Senegal* Tanzania* Togo*	Philippines*			
<b>EMERGENCY AID RECONSTRUCTION</b>	Morocco Uganda	Armenia Bangladesh Türkiye	Poland Russia Slovakia Ukraine	Jordan Lebanon Syria	Brazil Haiti*
<b>EMERGENCY AID RECONSTRUCTION DEVELOPMENT</b>	Burkina Faso Burundi* DR Congo* Ethiopia Niger*			Palestine	

\* Partnership projects in collaboration with other Belgian organisations.



# International cooperation programmes

Our programmes abroad are always carried out in collaboration with the national or local Caritas of the country concerned. The global Caritas network includes 162 national Caritas organisations.

## EMERGENCY AID (thanks to subsidies)

The main purpose of emergency aid, also known as humanitarian aid or crisis aid, is to save lives, reduce human suffering, and preserve and protect human dignity.

COUNTRY	PROJECT	PERIOD	BUDGET	FUNDING	EXPENSES 2023	CO-FINANCING
Burundi Niger Uganda Jordan	Humanitarian Protection in Action - PROHUMA 1	2021-2023	€ 7,820,000.00	DGD	€ 3,879,195.48	€ 0
Burundi Niger Uganda DR Congo	Humanitarian Protection in Action - PROHUMA 2	2023-2025	€ 7,820,000.00	DGD	€ 870.18	€ 0
DR Congo	Disaster relief and multi-sectoral response to humanitarian crises (Bukavu, Kasongo and Kwamouth)	2021-2023	€ 6,243,260.00	ECHO	€ 1,633,323.52	€ 190,000 (Cl.be / DGD) + € 110,000 (CAFOD)
DR Congo	Rapid and multi-sectoral response to humanitarian crises in Kwamouth, Kinshasa and Bukavu	2023-2024	€ 2,890,000 + \$ 883,053	ECHO + the Swiss government	€ 1,738,731.38	€ 95,900 (Cl.be) + € 44,100 (Magna)
DR Congo	Strengthening peace and social cohesion in South Kivu	2022-2023	€ 538,012.98	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (€ 403,012.98) + Lokumo Fund (€ 135,000)	€ 333,504.88	€ 0
				<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€ 7,585,625.44</b>	



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## DEVELOPMENT (thanks to subsidies)

Development cooperation focuses on tackling the root causes of poverty and crisis situations.

COUNTRY	PROJECT	PERIOD	BUDGET	FUNDING	EXPENSES IN 2023	CO-FINANCING
Burundi	Supporting entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector (Umwumbati WACU)	2023-2027	€ 9,440,000 (CI.be as lead in consortium with 7 partners)	EU	€ 3,386.77	10% shared by 7 partners
Belgium Burundi DR Congo Burkina Faso Niger Ethiopia Palestine	Programme to Enhance Social Cohesion and Resilience (COHERENCE)	2022-2026	€ 12,362,226.72	DGD	€ 2,565,253.47	20% (cofinancing by CI.be + 11.be + CNCND + WBI + Caritas Luxemburg, Secours Catholique + Lokumo Fund)
Ethiopia	Climate resilience in Soddo	2023	€ 130,000.00	Flemish Brabant	€ 130,000.00	€ 0
Ethiopia	Improved access to potable water and sanitation and hygiene services at 4 primary health centres in Edaghamus district, East Tigray	2023-2024	€ 55,407.00	King Baudouin Foundation/ Amélie Elisabeth Fund	€ 39,510.51	€ 5,550
Ethiopia	Improved access to potable water and sustainable water management for 60 rural families in Irob district of Tigray	2020-2023	€ 44,000.00	King Baudouin Foundation/ Amélie Elisabeth Fund	€ 24,857.00	€ 4,000
Haiti	Rainwater harvesting and better sanitation in Calumette	2021-2023	€ 60,000.00	WBI	€ 23,827.53	€ 6,000
Niger	Access to water and sustainable water management in the municipalities of Korahane and Gafati	2022-2023	€ 104,800.00	Vivaqua (€ 54,792) + Lokumo Fund (€ 50,000)	€ 89,312.08	€ 0
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>€ 2,876,147.36</b>	



## Emergency aid programmes with the Caritas network (through own resources or through 12-12)

Through the Caritas network, we are well placed to implement emergency aid programs. For this, we can count on other organisations from the network, which are well anchored locally.

COUNTRY	CRISIS	COMMITMENTS MADE IN 2023
Armenia	Nagorno-Karabach crisis	€ 150,000.00
Bangladesh	Floods	€ 25,000.00
Ethiopia	Tigray conflict	€ 40,000.00
Palestine	Gaza conflict	€ 20,000.00
Lebanon	Socio-economic crisis	€ 234,000.00
Morocco	Earthquake	€ 68,000.00
Poland	Support for Ukrainian refugees	€ 200,000.00
DR Congo	Mai-Ndombe crisis	€ 40,000.00
Russia	Support for Ukrainian refugees	€ 50,000.00
Slovakia	Support for Ukrainian refugees	€ 600,000.00
Syria	Earthquake	€ 525,000.00
Türkiye	Earthquake	€ 325,000.00
Ukraine	Conflict	€ 700,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>€ 2,977,000.00</b>

## Partnership projects

Caritas International has a partnership with a number of Belgian associations for the realization of projects that are in line with its vision and mission.

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF PROJECTS	EXPENSES 2023
South Africa	1	€ 5,690
Bangladesh	1	€ 320
Belgium	3	€ 50,642
Benin	3	€ 28,000
Burkina Faso	1	€ 9,800
Burundi	1	€ 1,400
Cameroon	1	€ 53,097
DR Congo	7	€ 102,702
Haiti	2	€ 10,074
Lebanon	1	€ 37,056
Mali	2	€ 5,378
Niger	1	€ 5,006
Nigeria	1	€ 1,850
Philippines	1	€ 5,500
Rwanda	1	€ 28,100
Senegal	1	€ 2,274
Tanzania	1	€ 3,000
Togo	1	€ 8,735
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>€ 358.624</b>



# Financial report

## Assets

<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>	<b>€ 3,952,000.43</b>
Intangible fixed assets	€ 40,208.89
Tangible fixed assets	€ 3,911,636.49
· Land and buildings	€ 3,686,121.30
· Furniture and vehicles	€ 225,515.19
Financial fixed assets	€ 155.05
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>42,989,803.64</b>
Amounts receivable within one year	€ 17,098,006.75
· Trade debtors	€ 6,596,969.18
· Other amounts receivable	€ 10,501,037.57
Current investments	€ 5,238,905.77
Cash at bank in hand	€ 20,300,379.82
Deferred charges and accrued income	€ 352,511.30
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>€ 46,941,804.07</b>

## Equity and liabilities

<b>EQUITY</b>	<b>€ 7,198,780.88</b>
Association funds	€ 2,880,472.41
Allocated funds	€ 2,215,691.09
Accumulated profits	€ 338,849.07
Investment grants	€ 1,763,768.31
<b>PROVISIONS</b>	<b>€ 538,496.86</b>
Provision major repairs and maintenance	€ 508,000.00
Provision for grants and legacies to reimburse	€ 30,496.86
<b>AMOUNTS PAYABLE*</b>	<b>€ 39,204,526.33</b>
Amounts payable within one year	€ 38,947,713.37
· Trade debts	€ 36,729,222.03
· Social security	€ 1,167,516.34
· Other amounts payable	€ 1,050,975.00
Accruals and deferred income	€ 256,812.96
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>€ 46,941,804.07</b>

\* Since 2022, the revenue allocated to emergency projects that is not spent during a fiscal year is assigned to a debt account for the projects, rather than to the reserves. We do this to make our financial statements (income statements and available funds for emergency aid) clearer.

Income and expenses remained fairly stable in 2023. We recorded almost 42.9 million euros in income and an equal amount in expenses. Once again, our donors showed their great solidarity.

We raised more than 4.2 million euros through our fundraising campaigns. These funds went to our structural projects and partnerships. The major crises of 2023 resulted in a major wave of generosity, with almost 4.5 million euros in funds raised. These donations were mainly related to our humanitarian response to the war in Ukraine and the earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria. An amount of 1.28 million euros was due to income from the campaign of the 12-12 consortium on Türkiye and Syria. We will use the balance to set aside a provision that we will use for related emergency aid projects in the financial year 2024.

There are also people who think of Caritas International in their wills. After deduction of more than 4.7 million euros in inheritance taxes, this income amounted to a net amount of about 1.5 million euros.

Our financial income doubled thanks to a rebound in the financial markets. Other items in the income statement remained more or less stable.

In terms of activities, we saw a sharp increase in voluntary return activities, in line with the higher revenues from Joint Reintegration Services (JRS). In our International Cooperation Department, activities remained fairly stable. As in 2022, there were also a lot of resources to spend in 2023 for the crisis in Ukraine. This involved almost 2.8 million euros that were raised in 2022 and spent on emergency aid in 2023.

Our asylum and migration activities accounted for 44% of our spending. Emergency aid and development cooperation accounted for 33.5%. The remainder was related to general costs, communication, fundraising and awareness-raising, and inheritance tax payments.

Wage costs increased by 15% as a result of various indexations and the growth of the workforce by 14 full-time equivalents. As we look to the future, we continue to make efforts to optimize and diversify our sources of income. It should be noted that some activities, particularly in the field of reception, are structurally underfunded. And there is a threat of cuts in government spending on reception and international solidarity.



## Results account 2023

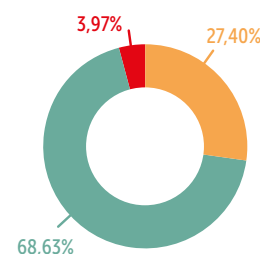
REVENUE	%	2023	2022
Donations	9,86	€ 4,228,028.17	€ 4,936,767.10
Donations via consortium 12-12	2,67	€ 1,285,282.81	€ 1,157,908.51
Legacies	16,54	€ 6,232,645.81	€ 7,169,536.32
Wallonie - Bruxelles International (WBI)	2,53	€ 1,289,950.48	€ 1,097,283.71
Brussels Capital Region	-0,01	€ 46,955.91	€ -3,522.63
Cities, communes, provinces	0,30	€ 269.20	€ 130,800.00
Multilateral institutions	0,50	€ 2,300.00	€ 214,689.16
Flemish government	0,45	€ 62,727.47	€ 194,845.95
Belgian government - DGD	14,05	€ 5,939,811.43	€ 6,090,976.94
Ministry of Justice - Ministry of Home Affairs	1,22	€ 927,390.51	€ 527,594.27
Belgian government - Fedasil	28,07	€ 13,900,863.54	€ 12,167,160.21
Coordination et Initiative pour Réfugiés et Etrangers	2,66	€ 1,197,583.32	€ 1,151,028.40
11.11.11	0,21	€ 102,656.26	€ 90,770.32
European Union	12,44	€ 3,558,911.54	€ 5,390,328.89
Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen	0,05	€ 19,709.22	€ 23,215.00
Foundations, other Caritas organizations, ...	2,20	€ 901,982.67	€ 952,289.18
European reintegration network	0,64	€ 41,651.20	€ 276,835.67
Joint Reintegration Services	1,92	€ 2,016,693.62	€ 830,767.37
Subsidies for employment (Actiris, Maribel, ...)	0,89	€ 436,260.62	€ 384,635.59
Other operating income	0,76	€ 210,078.01	€ 330,133.96
Financial products	0,42	€ 363,074.25	€ 183,975.59
<b>TOTAL WITHOUT EXCEPTIONAL</b>		<b>€ 42,764,826.04</b>	<b>€ 43,298,019.51</b>
Exceptional products	0,19	€ 106,573.00	€ 43,308.22
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>€ 42,871,399.04</b>	<b>€ 43,341,327.73</b>

EXPENDITURE	%	2023	2022
Reception of asylum seekers	37,44	€ 16,051,429.00	€ 14,647,347.00
Social services for migrants and refugees (frontline, guardianship, integration...)	1,10	€ 473,317.00	€ 785,694.00
Voluntary return	5,60	€ 2,402,651.00	€ 1,504,505.00
International cooperation	27,23	€ 11,674,204.00	€ 15,718,738.00
Crises	6,15	€ 2,635,482.00	
Communication & Mobilisation	4,04	€ 1,729,934.00	€ 1,426,656.00
Operating costs	18,43	€ 7,900,418.00	€ 9,999,706.30
· General operation costs	7,41	€ 3,178,209.70	€ 3,860,849.30
· Inheritance taxes	11,02	€ 4,722,208.30	€ 6,138,857.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>€ 42,867,435.00</b>	<b>€ 44,082,646.30</b>

	2023	2022
YEAR RESULT	€ 3,964,04	€ -741,318.57
Increase (-) / Decrease (+) of designated funds		€ 741,318.57
<b>PROFIT CARRIED FORWARD</b>	<b>€ 3,964,04</b>	<b>€ 0.00</b>

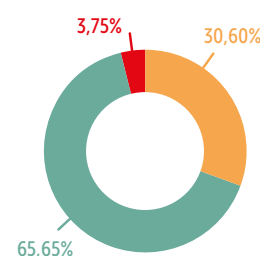
### REVENUE 2023

- Donations and legacies: € 11,745,956.79
- Government funding: € 29,421,368.84
- Other: € 1,704,073.41



### REVENUE 2022

- Donations and legacies: € 13,264,211.93
- Government funding: € 28,453,423.53
- Other: € 1,623,692.27



## Members of the board of directors

31 December 2023

Mr Bernard Woronoff, chairman  
Rev. Philippe de Dorlodot  
Mr Dominic Verhoeven, vice-chairman  
Mrs Marie-Christine d'Ursel-ter-Hark, vice-chairman  
Rev. Bruno Aerts  
Mrs Marie-Paule Moreau  
Rev. Martin Mvibudulu  
Mr Marc Nuytemans  
Mrs Emmeline Orban

Chief Executive Officer: Mr François Cornet (\*)

*(\*) François Cornet was succeeded as Chief Executive Officer by Luc Van Haute in January 2024.*



# Thank you!



Sincere thanks to all those who work by our side for a society of solidarity where all can enjoy a dignified life. In 2023, we once again stood up in defence of humanity and hospitality. What we achieved would not have been possible without the support, cooperation and enthusiasm of a great many people, organisations and institutions. We thank you wholeheartedly!

**Luc Van Haute**, *Chief Executive Officer*

## Special thanks go out to:

- > All our donors
- > All our enthusiastic volunteers, interns, community sponsorship reception groups and 'solidary homeowners'
- > Our employees at home and abroad who breathe life into our mission every day
- > Dioceses, parishes and religious congregations
- > The King Baudouin Foundation: the Amélie & Elisabeth and Bikes in Brussels funds / Porticus Foundation / Abbé Pierre Foundation
- > The Lokumo Fund
- > The umbrella organisations: 11.11.11 / CNCN-11.11.11 / NGO Federation / Acodex / Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen / CIRÉ / Concord / Voice
- > Caritas Internationalis / Caritas Europe / Various organisations within the international Caritas network / Netwerk Rechtvaardigheid en Vrede / Justice & Peace Commission / Kruit and Annoncer la Couleur / School Zonder Racisme / Iles de Paix / Belgian Red Cross / CAP/CAW Brabantia / Casa Legal / ERSO network / Consortium 12-12 / Move Coalition and all our other partners at home and abroad
- > The media: Kerknet / Kerk & Leven / Tertio / Cathobel / Dimanche / RCF
- > The schools, students and teachers who have enthusiastically taken us up on our educational offer.
- > Brewer AB InBev
- > **Our institutional partners:**
  - United Nations**  
International Organization for Migration (IOM)
  - European Union**  
Civil Protection and Humanitarian Operations (DG ECHO) / DG International Partnerships (DGD INTPA) / Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) / Joint Reintegration Services (Frontex)
  - Federal Government**  
Belgian Development Cooperation (DGD) / Belgian Development Agency (Enabel) / Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) / State Secretariat for Asylum and Migration and Social Integration / FPS Justice / FPS Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue – Social Maribel / PPS Social Integration (Article 60) / Guardianship Service / National Lottery / Maribel social fund
  - Flemish Government**  
Department of Education and Training / Flemish Partnership Water for Development
  - Wallonia-Brussels Federation and Walloon Region**  
Wallonia-Brussels International (WBI)  
Aide à la jeunesse, Housing Fund  
Department of Public Works, Health, Social Action and Patrimoines
  - Brussels Capital Region**  
Employment Agency (Actiris) / Brussels Environment / Joint Committee for Community Matters (Cocom)
  - Provinces, cities and municipalities**



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