



Caritas
ASIA
มูลนิธิคาร์ิตัสเอเชีย

REGIONAL CONFERENCE AND PARTNERS' FORUM

THEME:

**“RESPONDING TO THE CRY OF THE POOR AND CRY OF THE EARTH FOR
RESILIENT AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES”**

BANGKOK, 11 JUNE 2024



AGENDA

HOLY EUCHARIST

08:30
09:30

HOLY MASS

- Main Celebrant: His Excellency Peter B. Wells, Apostolic Nuncio (Ambassador) Concelebrated by Archbishops.
- Choir: (Thailand)

INAUGURAL SESSION

09:40
11:00

Moderator: Dr. Benedict Alo D Rozario, President, Caritas Asia.

• Welcome and Introduction

- Dr. Benedict Alo D Rozario: Words of welcome and introduction (5 Minutes)
- Fr. Pairat Sriprasert: Welcome from the local host (5 Minutes)

• Inaugural messages:

- Mr. Alistair Dutton, Secretary General, Caritas Internationalis (15 minutes)
- Most Rev. Isao Kikuchi, Archbishop of Tokyo and President of Caritas Internationalis (15 minutes)

• Chief Guest:

- His Excellency, Most Rev. Peter. B. Wells, Apostolic Nuncio to Thailand and Cambodia; and Apostolic Delegate to Laos (20 minutes)

11:00
11:30

Coffee Break

CONFERENCE SESSION

11:30
12:10

• Main Theme:

- “ Responding to the cry of the earth and cry of the poor for building inclusive and resilient communities. ”

• Keynote Speaker:

- Fr. Edwin A. Gariguez, Former Executive Director of Caritas Philippines

12:10
12:30

Questions and Answers

12:30
14:00

Lunch Break

14:00
14:45

Moderator: Mr. Kim Rattana, Executive Director, Caritas Cambodia and Regional Commission Member representing Southeast Asia.

1. Climate Resilient Communities:

- Speaker: Mr. Albino Nath, Regional Director, Caritas Bangladesh (15 Minutes)

2. Human Mobility – Panel Discussion (30 Minutes)

- Panelists: Mr. John Jirawat, Caritas Thailand; Fr. John Murray, NCCM; and Ms. Apinya Tajit, Stella Maris (7 minutes each + 9 minutes Q&A)

14:45
15:30

Group work, Sub-Region wise (Four groups), Global Partners may join the group based on their preference.
(Questions will be provided. Time allocated for group works is 45 minutes.)

15:30
16:00

Coffee Break

16:00
16:40

Group Work Presentation.

1. Central Asia Sub Region
2. East Asia Sub Region
3. South Asia Sub Region
4. South East Asia Sub Region

16:40
15:00

Summing up and closure by Moderator

17:15
18:15

Introducing C-AMBIT (side event)

18:30
21:00

SOLIDARITY NIGHT and DINNER



Fr. Edwin A. Gariguez

**“
Responding to the Cry of the Earth and Cry of the Poor
for Building Inclusive and Resilient Communities
”**

Pope Francis underscores an important insight about the interconnectedness between environmental degradation and poverty, aptly described as “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor”, wherein it critically examines the pressing issues of poverty, climate emergency, and the imperative for holistic strategies to foster resilience and inclusion. Communities, particularly in Asia, are becoming more vulnerable since they bear the brunt of climate change-induced disasters, which amplifies the existing socio-economic disparities and underscoring the urgent need for concerted action to mitigate these impacts.

Integrating eco-spirituality and cultural capital into community resilience-building efforts has become increasingly significant. In line with the encyclical *Laudato Si*, it is crucial to advocate for a paradigm shift that transcends mere economic and political considerations, emphasizing the necessity of a deep ethical and moral framework to guide our relationship with the earth, our common home. Only by having socially and ecologically sound ethical framework that we can set the stage for creating a truly sustainable future.

The key to building resiliency, as the seventh goal of the *Laudato Si* Action Platform, is the call for collective action and engagement in strengthening our ranks, mobilizing our sectors and constituencies to work towards practicable solutions to the climate and ecological crisis as part of our synodal journey.

This reflection also underscores the importance of integrating humanitarian, development, and inclusion strategies to address the multifaceted dimensions of poverty and climate emergency. It emphasizes the need for a continuum approach that bridges short-term emergency response with long-term development initiatives, ensuring that vulnerable communities are not only provided with immediate relief but also empowered to build community resilience. Poverty is not a stand-alone issue that can be addressed independently. Disasters and all the ensuing emergency responses are not totally detached from the pre-existing vulnerability of the poor.

The paper calls for a re-evaluation of Caritas’ prevailing humanitarian and development paradigms, advocating for strategies that prioritize strategies for integration and inclusion – for social and environmental justice, for the well-being of both people and the planet, especially the poor and the most vulnerable.

This reflection refers to the recently launched publication of Caritas Internationals in an attempt to present the impacts of displacement from the perspective of different Caritas organizations and regions, including Asia. It makes clear the call to “Leave No One Behind” and to make decisive action to protect migrants people and displaced communities. More importantly, our reflection should include the focus on the issue of climate-induced displacement or human mobility, along with conflict and violence being experienced both in internal and cross-border migration. This reflection refers to the recently launched publication of Caritas Internationals in an attempt to present the impacts of displacement from the perspective of different Caritas organizations and regions, including Asia. It makes clear the call to “Leave No One Behind” and to make decisive action to protect migrants people and displaced communities.

One strategic course of action to strengthen displaced communities’ resilience vis-à-vis the converging problem of climate crisis, conflict and displacement is to mobilize “anticipatory action” initiatives. In the case of the Philippines, a bill is being introduced to adopt a human rights-based approach to promote and protect the rights of IDPs in various situations, including armed conflict, violence, clan wars, human rights violations, development projects, and natural or human-made hazards. At the global level, a cursory assessment should be given to the recently held COP 28, particularly the adoption of loss and damages and the inclusion of displacement in the global stock take.

CONTEXT AND SITUATIONER

The Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC) clearly decries how climate crisis is hurting the developing countries in Asia: “. . . ours is a continent of massive poverty, where few enjoy great progress and prosperity while the many suffer in abject deprivation. And it is the poor and the needy who suffer most from the consequences of climate change. We are experiencing dramatic changes of season, extreme changes of weather, more frequently recurring and stronger typhoons, destructive flooding, drying up of whole areas, decrease in food production and spread of climate change related diseases.”¹

Here is a list of climate events for which attribution science has been able to determine a significant impact of climate change on both the probability of occurrence and the intensity of the event in Asia:

2023 Extreme humid heat in South Asia - India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Laos

<https://www.worldweatherattribution.org/extreme-humid-heat-in-south-asia-in-april-2023-largely-driven-by-climate-change-detrimental-to-vulnerable-and-disadvantaged-communities/>

2022 Heatwave in India and Pakistan

https://www.worldweatherattribution.org/wp-content/uploads/India_Pak-Heatwave-scientific-report.pdf

2015 Heatwave in India

https://www.ametsoc.net/eee/2015/16_india_pakistan.pdf

2022 Rainfall in Pakistan

<https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/2752-5295/acbfd5>

2019 Typhoon Hagibis in Tokyo

2017 Floods in Bangladesh

<https://hess.copernicus.org/articles/23/1409/2019/>

2013 Typhoon Haiyan in Philippines

<https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/10/6/064011/meta>

On record, Haiyan is the strongest tropical cyclone to make landfall. The damage from Haiyan is catastrophic! And it is not an act of God! It is anthropogenic – induced by global warming, originating from human activities and global warming!

¹ FABC, *FABC Papers 136: Global Warming and Climate Change and its Impact on Asia, Challenges and the Response of the Church, Climate Change Seminar, FABC & Misereor, November 2012*, in <https://fabc.org/document/fabc-papers-136/>

POVERTY AND CLIMATE JUSTICE: THE CRY OF THE EARTH IS THE CRY OF THE POOR

The encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, highlights the adverse impacts of the climate change on the poor and most vulnerable. Pope Francis aptly articulates the scale of the climate crisis:

*“Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. Its worst impact will probably be felt by developing countries in coming decades. Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as agriculture, fishing and forestry.”*²

A case at point is our country, the Philippines. It is at the doorstep of all major threats of climate change due to irreversible damage to agriculture, marine resources and the entire bionetworks. In terms of climate change vulnerability, the Philippines ranks 2nd with the greatest risk to disaster worldwide (2014 World Risk Report). Clearly, climate change and its ensuing extreme weather impact is hurting the most vulnerable population. And in terms of social groups – small farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples, women and children are identified as the most vulnerable sectors affected by climate change and extreme weather events, as they threaten both their lives and their livelihood. Extreme weather event is occurring more frequently in our country.

Laudato Si highlights the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation to the ever-worsening poverty of the people: *“The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation . . . Both everyday experiences and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest.”*³

The encyclical also noted the impacts of climate emergency to migration and widespread phenomenon of environmental refugees: *“There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation. They are not recognized by international conventions as refugees . . . without enjoying any legal protection whatsoever.”*⁴

Laudato Si offers a scathing critique of the global development and technological innovations that does not bring real improvement on the quality of life but on the contrary result to social exclusion, social breakdown, increased violence, rise of new forms of social aggressions, including war and social conflicts.⁵

We feel vindicated when Pope Francis promulgated his encyclical *Laudato Si*, categorically emphasizing the crucial nexus between the poverty situation and the environmental degradation. He appropriately articulates the interconnection – that the cry of the earth is the cry of the poor. Sustainable development is very much linked with the protection of our threatened ecology.

For the Church, climate change is an urgent issue that is clearly related to our Christian responsibility to care for the earth and to care for the poor and vulnerable in our midst. The social teachings of the Church are replete with pastoral exhortations invoking for environmental stewardship, social and intergenerational justice, the use of earth’s resources for common good and for authentic development. The voices of faith must be an indispensable part of our continuing environmental campaigns, in framing the agenda for collaborative action in our region in Asia.

² Pope Francis, *Laudati Si*, no. 25

³ *Ibid.*, no, 48

⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 25

⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 46

To promote a global sustainable ecology, we need to consider the complex nature of our ethical relationship with the whole environment. We need to critically assess our way of thinking about our connectedness to the Earth. And this goes beyond mere economic and political arena, for it challenges us to look into the realm of the human spirit. We need to have a radical paradigm shift. It is difficult and challenging, but not insurmountable. It is no less than the founder and chair of Climate Reality Project, Al Gore (1992, 12) who advocated for the pressing need for this approach: *“The more deeply I search for the roots of the global environmental crisis, the more I am convinced that it is an outer manifestation of an inner crisis that is, for lack of better word, spiritual. As a politician, I know full well the special hazards of using “spiritual” to describe a problem like this one . . . But what other word describes the collection of values and assumptions that determine our basic understanding of how we fit into the universe?”* ⁶

For Gore, underlying the problems ecological crisis and distorted development paradigm is an inner spiritual crisis. This spiritual dimension determines the way we look and relate to the world and the way we frame our values and our relationship with the cosmos. It follows that if our basic values and ethical principles governing our relationship with the earth are flawed or distorted, then we cannot effect a creative and life-sustaining transformation.

Thus, to remedy the growing malady of earth imbalances, we need to situate the issues and challenges of global environmental threats vis-à-vis our understanding of people’s ecological spirituality (or the evident lack of it). This is shown in the way we ethically formulate our respective positions, economic or political, at the local or global level. We need to acknowledge and analyze the religio-cultural causes underlying the destructive assaults on the environment.

In our attempt to address the present ecological crisis, we need to reckon with a more fundamental criteria for transformation – how to change the very fabric of our moral-philosophical consciousness so that it will be more oriented to the common good, intergenerational justice, integrity of creation and global solidarity. Only by having socially and ecologically sound ethical framework that we can set the

In analyzing the problem of ecological destruction, we see the need to go beyond the myopic monetary valuation of our natural resources to give weightier consideration to the demand for ecological protection, promotion of environmental justice and the common good. We must recognize the flaw in the prevailing economic framework which regards the natural resources as something to be exploited rather than a crucial reserve to be sustained and protected in order to preserve the ecological balance and to ensure sustainability for all – both for the human community and the threatened ecosystems.

In the Laudato Si Action Platform (LSAP), spearheaded by the Dicastery for Promotion of Integral Human Development, a set of ecological conversion agenda were set to respond to the call of Laudato Si to care for our common home. This set of principles and orientation which are rooted on faith principles and cultural capital can set the right direction for collaborative discernment and common action. As the encyclical clearly emphasizes: *“Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it.”* ⁷

⁶ Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1992), p. 12.

⁷ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, No. 19

The *Laudato Si* Action Platform calls for the following collective goals for common action according to our respective culture, experience, involvement and competence: response to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, ecological economics, adoption of sustainable lifestyles, ecological education, ecological spirituality, and community resilience and empowerment. ⁸

The seventh goal in LSAP, community resilience and empowerment, emphasizes community action and engagement in strengthening our ranks, mobilizing our sectors and constituencies to work for toward practicable solutions to the climate and ecological crisis that we are confronted with. We need to harness our mutual support and finding our strength in collaborative action, as part of our synodal journey in responding to the climate emergency and ever-worsening ecological degradation in our common home.

CRUCIAL NEXUS: HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE, INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT AND INCLUSION STRATEGY

In a Position Paper submitted to the World Humanitarian Summit, Caritas Internationalis underlined the need to address the long-term vulnerability and to pursue the program for resiliency, not just for the short-term emergency:

“The humanitarian community – donors and responders – has a poor record of responding to early signs of potential crises. There is a similar tendency to quickly move on once the greatest immediate threats have been addressed. This short-term perspective and engagement undoubtedly saves lives. However, additional long-term suffering may not be prevented and the livelihoods of people may not be sufficiently restored to reduce vulnerability to future shocks. Humanitarian actors must take a longer view – identifying and addressing vulnerability through investments in disaster risk reduction through accompaniment of vulnerable and/or affected people as they strive to build resilience.” ⁹

The over-all goal should be to sustain empowered and resilient communities towards holistic development in adapting blended humanitarian and development models and in practicing robust climate and disaster resilient technologies, mechanisms, structures, and standards. It causes sustained community readiness to disasters and emergencies and improved economic conditions of the extremely poor and vulnerable people in the communities.

For the Church, humanitarian response is an urgent and priority work that is clearly related to our Christian responsibility to serve the poor and the most neglected in our midst. However, poverty is a pre-existing vulnerability. And we need to harness the resiliency of the people both in long term development program and in humanitarian emergency response, as a continuum.

In confronting the climate emergency, we need to make humanitarian response an integral strategy in serving the poor, who happens to be also the most vulnerable. We need to provide the crucial nexus between humanitarian work and a more long-term developmental programming.

In the face climate emergency – with the recurring disasters and extreme weather events that are now regularly entering the country, with more frequency and intensity, we cannot afford to be complacent and indifferent. We are all affected, and we all suffer from impacts of disasters and calamities, no matter where we are, whether in the urban centers or in the rural far-flung communities.

⁸ Dicastery for Promotion of Integral Human Development, *Laudato Si Goals*, in: <https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/laudato-si-goals/>

⁹ Caritas Internationalis, *A Faith-Based Perspective for World Humanitarian Summit*, in:

<https://www.caritas.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/WorldHumanitarianSummit16Position.pdf>

But in our effort to respond we are challenged to see the larger picture and to see how all the problems are interconnected. Poverty is not a stand-alone issue that can be addressed independently. Disasters and all the ensuing emergency responses are not totally detached from the pre-existing vulnerability of the poor.

One of the significant organizational learnings we have in NASSA/Caritas Philippines is that humanitarian emergency response cannot stand dissociated, but it has to find its link to a more long-term development framework. However, the framework of humanitarian response is somehow limited primarily to address the survival needs and vulnerabilities of disaster survivors. The long-term development programming that should proceed even beyond recovery period is found wanting.

This problem was observed and duly underlined by Rusty Binas, our Caritas Global Advisor on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Building. In his analysis of the current landscape, humanitarian workers typically respond swiftly to urgent crises such as conflict and natural disasters, while longer-term challenges fall under the purview of development efforts. However, this division between emergency response and sustained development is not evident at the community level, where residents must address both immediate emergencies and ongoing needs simultaneously. Unfortunately, this artificial separation, largely driven by donor priorities, has led to tensions between humanitarian and development workers and has fostered detrimental practices within affected communities. ¹⁰

The need to connect the recovery emergency strategies to social reform agenda is also of paramount importance. We take the position that recovery or rebuilding cannot be effectively undertaken without addressing the equally urgent task of pursuing social and economic reforms. In the case of super typhoon Haiyan, the most devastated regions and provinces happen to be among the poorest and the most unequal in the country because of the weak implementation of social and economic reform programs such as land reform, social protection, agricultural modernization and industrialization.

In drafting the recovery proposal, we need to address vulnerability by creating and maximizing the links between relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) objectives. It also looks at connectedness, referring to the need to ensure that activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context that takes longer-term and interconnected problems into account. The prevailing questions were: How is the proposed intervention helping to reduce vulnerability to future crises? Is it building the resilience of communities? Integrating humanitarian work and a more long-term developmental programming is necessary to expand the prevailing paradigm and to provide the needed transition. It is a continuing task, part of the continuing agenda and planning processes.

Caritas Switzerland has come up with an integrated approach to adaptation as a climate-resilient pathways out of poverty.¹¹ This kind of initiative is key to exploring integration of programs to be more responsive to the demand to have a practicable resiliency framework to respond to both humanitarian and development nexus of our Caritas mission.

NASSA/Caritas Philippines, in its strategy of working for the poor, is always reflecting on the most effective way of bringing about the inclusion strategy for the poor and the marginalized. We are aware that the present model of “development” accelerates the creation of wealth among the capitalist-elites who control the world economy, while ironically it results to ever widening disparity and ever deplorable massive poverty among the basic sectors of society. Moreover, the mainstream development model inevitably brings negative impacts on the environment, and more often than not, the destruction that it causes is not only widespread but also irreversible. The prevailing development paradigm does not factor in the price of ecological destruction that is being wrought continually by pursuing unlimited economic growth.

¹⁰ Rusty Binas, *Concept Note for annual on Measuring Resilience for Humanitarian and Development Worker*. Undated. Unpublished.

¹¹ Caritas Switzerland, *Climate-Resilient Pathways Out of Poverty: Caritas Switzerland Integrated Approach to Adaptation*, in https://issuu.com/caritas_schweiz/docs/ca_themenpapier_climate_en_web

Laudato Si decries the exclusion of the poor and the utter neglect or indifference even in the international political and economic centers of power. The poor are considered merely as collateral damage, they remain at the bottom of the pile, and their problems are not considered important, but only brought up as an afterthought. But the poor and the excluded are the majority of the global populations, billions of people!¹²

Therefore, we affirm that the ethical imperative to address the issues of justice, common good, and inequality in the economic and political sphere must be included in any framework for integral development. We need to emphasize the underlying moral and ethical context of our ecological problems and the call for meaningful commitment, not just for the Church, but for all people, because what is at stake is our common home. Alternative development paradigm demands that a more integrative or inclusive model take into account the inseparable link of both human and ecosystem well-being as key consideration for sustainable development framework, underlining our preferential option for the poor and the most vulnerable.

Laudato Si calls for a re-evaluation of the prevailing models of global development and a redefinition of our notion of progress so that it can truly serve the common good, particularly the poor and the excluded. The encyclical is categorical in describing the irony of the so-called development vis-à-vis the resulting poverty and exclusion of the people: “A *technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress. Frequently, in fact, people’s quality of life actually diminishes . . . in the midst of economic growth.*”¹³

CLIMATE EMERGENCY, CONFLICT AND HUMAN MOBILITY

According to the 2023 Global report on Internal Displacement, there were **60.9 million internal displacements, or movements**, recorded in 2022 across 151 countries and territories. A record 32.6 million were associated with disasters and 28.3 million with conflict and violence. In the same year, there are 10.1 million disaster displacements in East Asia and the Pacific and 12.5 million in South Asia.¹⁴

In 2020 the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reported that, in the period of the past 60 years, 40% of conflicts between countries are linked to natural resource issues, involving dispute over water and land, as caused or exacerbated by climate change.¹⁵

This issue of displacement of people due to climate change impact had been highlighted in the recently launched publication of Caritas Internationalis, “Displaced by a Changing Climate: Caritas Voices Protecting and Supporting People on the Move,” which is also part of the Global Year of Action of the “Together We” campaign. The publication tries to document and explore the experiences of individuals and communities who are experiencing internal or across border displacement from the different national Caritas organizations and regions, including Asia, calling for the decisive action to protect migrants people and displaced communities.¹⁶

¹² Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, no. 49

¹³ *Ibid.*, no. 194

¹⁴ International Displacement Monitoring Center, 2023 Global Report on Internal Displacement, in: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2023/>

¹⁵ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI Yearbook 2020: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, in https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/SIPRI%20Annual%20Review%202020_Final.pdf

¹⁶ Caritas Internationalis, *Caritas Displacement Publication Highlights Desperate Need for Action to Protect People on the Move*, in <https://www.caritas.org/2023/10/caritas-climate-displacement-publication-highlightsdesperate-need-for-action-to-protect-people-on-the-move/>

Communities experiencing climate-induced displacement have also become increasingly more vulnerable to conflict and violence due to pressure on local resources and ensuing dispute occasioned by the arrival of large number of settlers in the host community, when the resources become even more scarce. Oftentimes, tension and violence erupt, resulting to continuing movement and further displacement. Cross-border migration is equally risky and people are subjected to more dangers, finding themselves into more vulnerable situation during the journey. And when they arrive to another country they have not been accorded with regular status and no legal framework is in place to guarantee their safety and respect of their rights. Most of them have experienced cases of human rights violations such as assault, forced recruitment, sexual abuse, torture, and human trafficking.

Caritas document after presenting the section on the growing reality of suffering of the displaced communities, it offers concrete plans, particularly in addressing the issue of human rights violations, going into the demand for increased funding and how to apply the policy and legal framework of "Leave No One Behind." It is incumbent upon us in Caritas national organizations to make use of our collective reflection and take on the challenge in taking concrete steps and adapting the framework in responding to the cry of the climate vulnerable communities.

At the national level, there was also a move to incorporate the issue of human mobility in the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) as a way to pursue long-term resilience strategy in terms of policy. According to Platform on Disaster Displacement data: *"Out of 53 NAPs submitted to the UNFCCC so far (as of February 2024), 85% reference one or more forms of human mobility. However, only 66% of NAPs contain concrete provisions or commitments to address mobility in some way."* In formulating and adopting plans and policy framework at respective local level, the integration of human mobility in developing national adaptation strategy is a crucial step *"to ensure that climate-related mobility can be addressed, managed, prevented, or facilitated as part of a holistic policy framework that connects the local, national, and global level and includes data collection, implementation, localization, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting."*¹⁷

Another strategic course of action to strengthen displaced communities' resilience vis-à-vis the converging problem of climate crisis, conflict and displacement is to mobilize "anticipatory action" initiatives. Anticipatory action (AA) is simply defined as *"a growing area of climate and disaster risk management that emphasizes the use of climate services and risk analyses to predict where crises might strike and enable action to prevent or mitigate impacts before disasters occur."*¹⁸

There have been but few AA initiatives that focused explicitly on communities that have been displaced, and opportunities were missed. AA is particularly important for it can provide preparatory measures in advance to minimize the risk of displacement, particularly for people in hazard prone areas or for communities with pre-existing vulnerabilities. With this approach, our response is not always necessarily a crisis mode, we move beyond emergency mindset, but instead, to build self-reliance and resilience of the climate-vulnerable communities facing imminent displacement.

¹⁷ Platform on Disaster Displacement, *Briefing Note – Human Mobility in National Adaptation Plans*, in <https://disasterdisplacement.org/resource/human-mobility-in-naps-updated/>

¹⁸ De la Poterie, A., et al., *Anticipatory action to manage climate risks: Lessons from the Red Cross Red Crescent in Southern Africa, Bangladesh, and Beyond*, *Climate Risk Management*, Volume 39, 2023 in: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212096323000025#:~:text=Abstract,mitigate%20impacts%20before%20disasters%20occur>

In the Philippines we are advocating for the bill protecting the rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). It aims to adopt a human rights-based approach to promote and protect the rights of IDPs in various situations, including armed conflict, violence, clan wars, human rights violations, development projects, and natural or human-made hazards. The IDP Bill can address specific issues and challenges related to internal displacement that include natural disasters and environmental displacement, conflict and violence-induced displacement, land disputes and development projects, Indigenous peoples' displacement. By addressing these specific displacement issues, the bill can contribute to the protection of IDP rights and the promotion of inclusive and sustainable development.¹⁹

In the recently held COP 28, we in Caritas was one of the faith-based civil society organization that pushed for the adoption of loss and damages in the agenda of the conference and in the negotiations. CI, with our Secretary General Alistair Dutton, helped draft a statement outlining major principles in forming loss and damages fund that will provide necessary financing after extreme weather events, to be accessed particularly by communities in the global south.

It is worth noting how the issue of climate change and human mobility had been part of the discourse in global climate negotiations for more than a decade now. It just affirms that the displaced communities are acknowledged to be in a particular vulnerability and that efforts to respond are necessary to avert or minimize the loss and damages due to climate-induced displacement. The inclusion of displacement in the global stocktake, including the decision to operationalize the loss and damages fund, should encourage our government to address the issue of displacement in relation to urgent climate actions in view of ever worsening climate emergency. This can be part of our global advocacy in the region.

CONCLUDING CHALLENGE

One important tenets of Pope Francis *Laudato Si* is the call to have an integral approach in responding to the problem of exclusion, poverty and ecological crisis. Pope Francis categorically emphasizes: "There are not two coexisting crises, one of the environment and one of society, but there is a single and complex socio-ecological crisis. The path to a solution requires a holistic approach to fighting poverty, restoring dignity to those excluded, and caring for nature at the same time."²⁰

More than anything that divides us in Asia, we can pursue a common agenda to protect our fragile ecosystem from the threat of continuing climate crisis, and to respond to the call for ecological justice. We have the moral imperative to act. Climate change goes beyond borders. We are all interconnected for we are living on one planet. And we, as one global community, we believe that the cry of mother earth is as equally urgent as the cry of the poor: "Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach, it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."²¹

Laudato Si emphasizes the underlying moral and ethical context of our ecological problems and the call for meaningful commitment, not just for the Church, but for all people, because what is at stake is our common home! We, in Asia, stand together in solidarity with the global community to protect the planet, to pursue our campaigns for a sustainable future.

¹⁹ House Bill No. 8269 - An Act Protecting the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons and Penalizing the Acts of Arbitrary Internal Displacement

²⁰ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, no. 139

²¹ *Ibid.*, no. 49

Bio Father EDWIN A. GARIGUEZ

Social Action Director Apostolic Vicariate of Calapan



Edwin A. Gariguez, ordained a Catholic priest in 1993, is renowned for his dedication to environmentalism and advocacy for marginalized communities in the Philippines.

Initiating programs like Peasant-Net in Calapan, Oriental Mindoro, he empowered farmers before transitioning to roles advancing indigenous rights. Formerly executive secretary of NASSA/Caritas Philippines, the advocacy, development, and humanitarian arm of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), from 2010 to 2020. During his term, he represented Southeast Asia to the Regional Commission of Caritas Asia and he represents the region to Caritas Internationalis as well.

Locally, he collaborates closely with civil society groups, advocating for social transformation and ecological causes. Fr. Gariguez holds a Master's Degree in Theology from Ateneo de Manila University, graduating Summa Cum Laude in 1992. He obtained his Doctorate in Anthropology from the Asian Social Institute in 2008.

He also holds a Certificate in Productivity and Quality Management with Specialization in Community and Area Development Resilience and Sustainability from the Graduate School of Development Academy of the Philippines.

Father Gariguez's remarkable contributions has earned him the 2012 Goldman Prize Award, considered to be the Nobel Prize for environmental advocates. He was also awarded with an Honoris Causa: Doctor of Philosophy from Xavier University, Ateneo de Cagayan, in 2016.

Presently, he serves as Social Action Director for the Apostolic Vicariate of Calapan and Development Program Support Coordinator for the Mangyan Mission, while teaching Ecological Philosophy at St. Augustine College Seminary. He also chairs the Board of Tebtebba (Indigenous People's International Centre for Policy Research and Education). He is the Lead Convenor of Protect VIP (Verde Island Passage), and one of the founders and lead convenors of Center for Energy, Ecology and Development (CEED) whose advocacy and programs are focused on transformative energy, ecological justice and people-centered development.

CLIMATE RESILIENT COMMUNITY

Albino Nath

Climate justice places the paramount importance of ensuring a safe, sustainable, and fair world for all. It revolves around embedding equity and human rights at the heart of decision-making and actions concerning climate change. Research underscores that those least accountable for climate change bear its harshest repercussions. With certain communities lacking the means to tackle and alleviate the impacts of the climate crisis, climate change emerges as both an environmental and a social justice concern.

Bangladesh is vulnerable to both disasters and climate change and ranked the seventh extreme disaster risk-prone country as per the report from the Global Climate Risk Index 2021. Bangladesh, home to over 160 million individuals, faces acute vulnerability to evolving climate challenges.



Projections suggest a 1.5°C temperature rise by 2050, imperiling the lives and livelihoods of approximately 15 million coastal inhabitants. Furthermore, 90 million people reside in “high climate exposure risk areas,” with an additional 53 million facing “very high” exposure. Bangladesh’s losses of \$3.72 billion over two decades due to climate change highlight its severity. Rural-to-urban migration, driven by the pursuit of greater economic and social stability, appears inevitable.



Bangladesh has been increasingly attentive to adapting to the impacts of climatic hazards. Various initiatives are taking to adapt with climate change and enhance community resilience power, such as the development of low-cost climate-resilient housing, embankments, and industries for employment opportunities are underway.

Adaptation measures include crop switching/diversification, soil conservation through organic fertilizer use, mixed crop-livestock and crop-fish farming systems, adjusting planting and harvesting dates, utilizing drought-resistant varieties, and implementing high-yield water-sensitive crops, Asset Based Community Driven (ABCD) Approach, saline tolerant crops production, mulching, composting, vermin compost, bag gardening, raising bed, native seed conservation etc. However, the coastal belt faces a significant water crisis, rainwater harvesting, re-excavation of pond and desalination techniques are using.



In addition to constructing high platforms for water tank installations to address water logging and hygiene concerns, we are also advocating for the use of eco-friendly cooking stoves called “Bandhu Chulla” within the community. To bolster disaster resilience, we’re building low-cost housing units with RCC pillars, CGI Tin Sheets, and employing cross bracing and corner bracing techniques to reinforce structural integrity against natural disasters, including floods.



An appealing aspect of our initiative is the comprehensive training provided to local masons and carpenters, ensuring their active involvement and empowering the community to withstand challenges. Furthermore, we’re promoting the adoption of transparent sheets to reduce reliance on artificial lighting, leading to significant energy savings and reduced electricity bills.



Bangladesh is still in the nascent stages of building climate-resilient communities, introducing new techniques and technologies in limited areas. Raising awareness and educating at the grassroots level on climate change adaptation requires more time and effort. Ward Disaster Management Committees play a crucial role at the grassroots level but lack sufficient funding. Providing funds to these committees would enhance their ability to respond effectively to immediate needs in remote areas and ensure long-term sustainability. Introducing climate insurance for coastal communities could bolster their resilience against climate change impacts.

Encouraging climate-friendly businesses and activities through reward systems can be attractive. Building strong and sustainable livelihoods is essential for creating resilient communities, particularly in remote areas where livelihood opportunities are seasonal. Women's empowerment, including entrepreneurship and engagement in local markets, can significantly enhance community resilience. Providing multi-income opportunities at the household level can further strengthen resilience.



Similar to numerous developing nations, particularly those susceptible to the impacts of climate change, Bangladesh has primarily emphasized “hardware” adaptation strategies, overlooking other dimensions such as software, org-ware, and heartware. This bias has hindered sustainable and effective adaptation efforts. Bangladesh, with its emphasis on climate-proofing infrastructure and technology, must now prioritize holistic adaptation approaches that include rural resilience, natural capital preservation, and community asset strengthening, while fostering good governance for resilient institutions.

True climate justice transcends mere financial aid; it necessitates a substantial shift in the policies and behaviors of historically responsible entities, chiefly the developed nations of the Global North. The time for action is now, not just in rhetoric but in tangible commitments capable of reshaping the trajectory of climate impact on vulnerable nations. Let us forge a world founded on compassion, where everyone enjoys equal opportunities to thrive and flourish.



Bio Mr. Albino Nath

Regional Director (acting) Caritas Bangladesh Khulna Region



Mr. Albino Nath, a Bangladeshi by birth, is currently serving as the Regional Director (Acting) for Caritas Bangladesh in the Khulna Region. He holds a Master's degree in Development Policy and Studies from Khulna University and a Master's degree in Social Science in Social Work from the National University.

Mr. Nath has been with Caritas Bangladesh for seven years, initially joining the Disaster Management Department as a project focal. Throughout his tenure, he has supervised various projects focusing on disaster management, climate change, migration, and development. He has extensive experience in these areas and has dedicated his career to serving the most vulnerable populations in the coastal belt.

His work includes active involvement in emergency response, low-cost housing, climate-adaptive livelihoods, climate-adaptive infrastructure, building back safer communities, enhancing community resilience, and developing multi-use cyclone shelters and others.

Mr. Nath's contributions have significantly impacted the well-being and resilience of those he serves.

Caritas Thailand

Thailand can be seen to lie in the centre of Southeast Asia. Because of its location, infrastructure, development and hosting of various international institutions, such as the UN agencies and multinational companies, Thailand serves as a hub for so many things – good and bad. It is a hub for trade, commerce and drugs; for tourism and trafficking in persons; for business, industry and migrant labour; for regional security and infrastructure and refugees.

Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia are Thailand's neighbours, each having its own issues with poverty, oppression or conflict. So their people look to Thailand for security and opportunity. Vietnam is a nearby ASEAN country seeing a rising number, seeking refuge in Thailand. Peoples from countries further afield look to Thailand for asylum with UNHCR. In terms of migration, Thailand truly is a place for receiving, sending and transiting.

There are up to four million migrant workers in the country, serving its needs for labour in business, industry, farming and development. There are nine "temporary shelters" in Thailand, along the border with Myanmar, for some 100,000 long-term refugees from Myanmar. With an ongoing revolution in Myanmar, there are now people fleeing into Thailand, seeking safety and work.

Within such a large migration context, corruption raises its head and trafficking becomes a reality. This is especially so with the fishing industry, but not that sector alone. With the violent situation in Myanmar, human trafficking is becoming more and more an issue with ones fleeing, desperately seeking an alternative.



One can see that the human mobility picture presented by Thailand is complex and multi-layered. Caritas Thailand response to this picture is three-pronged:

- a) Human trafficking: focus is on victims in the various workplaces in Thailand, esp, fishing and sex work, being primarily concerned with prevention and protection.
- b) Migrant workers: focus is on upholding the rights of the worker and helping them access services
 - health and education
 - along with vocational training, livelihood support and community building.
- c) Refugees and displaced populations (both Myanmar and urban refugees): focus is on child protection, sustainable livelihoods, supporting Extremely Vulnerable Individuals, accessing education, humanitarian assistance.

A concerted effort is required in responding to a complex issue in such a large region with its huge population. Caritas Thailand is working closely with various actors and institutions at national (CNATT), sub regional (GMS-AT Task Force), regional (Asia Human Mobility Network) and international (COATNET) levels in addressing the mentioned issues through different types of interventions, including joint capacity buildings, campaigns, awareness raising events and cross border collaborations with the fellow Caritas and other like-minded organizations in the neighboring countries.



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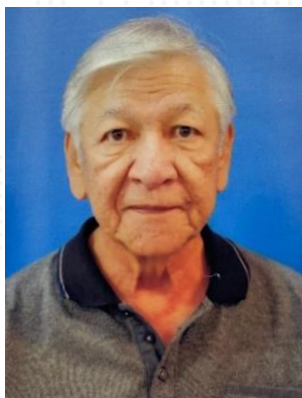
- . CNATT - Catholic Network Against Trafficking in Thailand
- . GMS - AT Task Force - Greater Mekong Sub Region-Anti Trafficking Task Force
- . Asia Human Mobility Network - A newly established network by Caritas Asia
- . COATNET - Christian Organisations Against Trafficking in Human Beings

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Juventino (Ben) Mendoza

Program Director COERR (Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees)



Ben joined COERR in October 2002, following a long and successful career in the corporate sector as Managing Director of a multinational pharmaceutical company in Thailand, and as Business Development Director for Asia. Ben graduated from the Ateneo de Manila University with a Bachelors Degree in the Behavioral Sciences, then with an MBA degree from the University of the Philippines.

As Program Director of COERR, Ben has overall responsibility for planning and implementation of COERR's humanitarian interventions and services, in accordance with COERR's mandate and through the invaluable support of COERR's Donor-Partners. COERR's interventions are implemented in 4 areas, namely:

- 1) a Multi-sectoral integrated program implemented in all 9 refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border,
- 2) frontline Emergency Assistance for Displaced Persons along the Thai-Myanmar border,
- 3) a program for providing Basic Services for Urban Refugees and Asylum Seekers through the

Bangkok Refugee Center (BRC) and in the Immigration Detention Center (IDC), and 4) Emergency Assistance for Vulnerable Thai communities affected by natural disasters.

John P Murray osa

Director NCCM – National Catholic Commission on Migration



Fr. John P Murray is an Australian, a member of the Order of St Augustine and priest within the Order. While living in Bangkok, he is assigned as a member of his Order community in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

His Province assigned him on mission to reach out to migrants and refugees in Thailand since October 2005 and in January 2006, Fr. John Murray began to work with Caritas Thailand. With COERR (Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees), Fr. John Murray's focus has been offering pastoral care for urban asylum seekers and refugees, working with others in the same endeavour – churches, NGOs, schools and individuals.

He also works with a Burmese priest in Mae Hong Son, helping in outreach to Karenni refugees and other Burmese in Thailand. Fr. John Murray offers project management and administration support for the staff and he shares responsibility for international cooperation projects between Caritas in Thailand and Myanmar to help Burmese migrant workers.

Fr. John Murray is active in supporting Caritas Thailand and Caritas Asia in areas of communication and program development, as well as issues around migration at Caritas International level.

Ms. Apinya Tajit

Deputy Director The Stella Maris Seafarer's Center – Sriracha, Thailand



Ms. Apinya Tajit is the Deputy Director of the Stella Maris Seafarer's Center, an NGO in Thailand. Stella Maris provides pastoral care, services, and support for workers in the Thai fishing industry. Ms. Apinya has dedicated herself for more than 18 years to combating human trafficking in Thailand, and she has worked tirelessly to assist workers exploited in forced labor. She has helped hundreds of workers in the fishing sector from various countries, including Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia, Burma, and Bangladesh, and has also played an active role in raising awareness of child trafficking. Ms. Apinya visits schools throughout the country to educate more than 10,000 students each year.

Ms. Apinya assists Thai authorities in the victim identification process, which can be especially difficult as fishing vessels are out to sea for months at a time.

In one instance, authorities did not initially identify workers on a refrigerated cargo ship as victims of trafficking. Upon Ms. Apinya's request, however, authorities conducted a new round of screening for these workers and, with her assistance, identified all of the workers as trafficking victims.

Her assistance often does not end when individuals are identified as victims of trafficking, however; she also helps them reintegrate into society and avoid revictimization. Using her in-depth knowledge, Ms. Apinya has helped Thai authorities understand the lives of fishermen. Through several trainings for anti-trafficking authorities, Ms. Apinya helped to improve their capacity to detect indicators of exploitation at sea.

Jirawat (John) Chenpasuk

Program Coordinator National Secretariat of Caritas Thailand



Jirawat (John) Chenpasuk a Thai native, is originally from the computer field, studied in Sydney, Australia. He started the humanitarian work with the Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR) in 2000. John has been working in both emergency relief and community development. He has also experienced in monitoring activities (as member of the team); 2004 Tsunami in Thailand and 2008 Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar. His current position is the Program Coordinator at National Secretariat of Caritas Thailand.

As a program coordinator at the National Secretariat, John has been working together with different Desks within Caritas Thailand such as coordinating with the National Catholic Commission on Migration (NCCM) and the National Catholic Commission for Seafarers (NCCS) or Stella Maris to strengthen the Catholic Network Against Trafficking in Thailand (CNATT) with Talitha Kum Thailand, religious congregations and the Church organizations working on anti trafficking. One of the programs implemented with CNATT members is the Reintegration

Program for Thai people returning to home country from different countries in Europe such as Denmark (in cooperation with the Danish Refugee Council - DRC), Austria (with Caritas Austria), etc.

Since 2021, John has been coordinating with the Diocesan Social Action Centers (DISACs) or diocesan Caritas to implement the Regional Program for Elderly in Asia: Thailand, supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Caritas Germany.



408/42, 10th Floor,
Phaholyothin Place Building, Phayathai Road,
Samsennai Bangkok, 10400 Thailand.

Tel : +66 2619 0634-5

E- mail : asiacaritas@caritas.asia

Website : <https://caritas.asia>