

Brussels, 7 May 2025  
(OR. en)

8557/25

COHAFA 24  
COHOM 58  
COAFR 85  
SAN 193  
GENDER 33  
PROCIV 45  
RELEX 524  
INTER-REP 53

**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations  
Subject: Forgotten and neglected crises - situation of women and girls -  
presentation by Caritas Polska

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Following the meeting of the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) on 23 and 24 April 2025, delegations will find in Annex the presentation made by Caritas Polska<sup>1 2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Caritas Polska, identification number in the EU Transparency Register: 034694393502-45.  
<sup>2</sup> This document contains a presentation by an external stakeholder and the views expressed therein are solely those of the third party it originates from. This document cannot be regarded as stating an official position of the Council. It does not reflect the views of the Council or of its members.



## Voices from the field

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Forgotten and neglected crises – situation of women and girls

Work of Caritas Poland and Caritas Ethiopia in Tigray

# About Caritas and Localisation

Caritas Poland is the biggest social organisation in Poland supporting people in need in Poland and 36 countries.



- Caritas Confederation Members are **present in 164 countries and operating in over 200 territories.**
- Caritas' commitment to local leadership is embedded in its core values of **partnership and subsidiarity.**
- Caritas is decentralised, with **each national organisation operating autonomously within its own country** or region. This enables efficient and timely locally-led action that is informed by the needs, priorities and strengths of the local community.
- As the **social action arm of the local Catholic Church,** Caritas is present in local communities and almost always at the heart of an emergency, well placed to offer the best support possible for the people in need.
- Caritas Member Organisations are signatories of the Charter for Faith-Based Humanitarian Action, endorsed at the World Humanitarian Summit – **confirming our impartiality in provision of humanitarian assistance and protection in alignment with fundamental humanitarian principles.**



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# Ethiopia as complex crisis – is it a „forgotten crisis”?



Occured unnoticed  
(war in Tigray,  
displacement)

Protracted conflict  
situation

Cumulative effect  
of recurring  
natural disasters

Little media  
coverage and  
interest

Poor political  
commitment to  
solve the crisis

## INFORM Severity Index - all crises. Release: March 2025

CRISIS	DRIVERS	INFORM Severity Index (1-5)	INFORM Severity category (1-5)	INFORM Severity category (Very Low-Very High)	Impact of the crisis (1-5)	Conditions of people affected (1-5)	People in need (1-5)	Concentration of conditions (1-5)	Complexity of the crisis (1-5)	Society and safety (1-5)	Operating environment (1-5)
Complex crisis in Ethiopia	Displacement,Floods,Conflict,Drought	4,3	5	Very High	4,6	4,5	5,0	4,0	3,8	3,6	4,0
Northern Ethiopia Conflict	Conflict,Displacement	4,3	5	Very High	4,5	4,5	4,9	4,0	3,8	3,6	4,0
Drought in Ethiopia	Drought	4,1	5	Very High	4,1	4,5	5,0	4,0	3,3	3,6	3,0
International Displacement	Displacement	3,1	4	High	4,0	2,2	3,4	1,0	3,6	3,6	3,5

*Inform Severity Index* measures the severity of humanitarian crises based on multiple indicators. These indicators are based on three overarching dimensions: the impact of crises, the conditions of people affected and the complexity of crises

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# Situation in Tigray and other regions



- War in Tigray 2020-2022 – **even 600 000 casualties, 60% civilians**
- Ethiopia hosts **1 million refugees** from neighbouring countries
- **Conflict-induced displacement internally – 4.2M** - living conditions continue to deteriorate due to dwindling resources and overcrowding
- **Conflict in Tigray** remains unresolved – growing tensions
- **New conflicts across the regions** - recently in Amhara and Oromia
- Huge **pressing humanitarian needs**:
  - Health risks: increasing rates of cholera, measles and malaria
  - Almost 2 million people face water scarcity
  - **40% of children under 5 years of age** are malnourished
- Protection risks: child enrollment to military groups, atrocities and war crimes, conflict-related sexual violence – even 50% of women in Tigray
- Schools in Tigray were closed in 2020 – 2023 and only in this region 2,4M children did not go to school – **51% children are still not back to school**



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## Situation of women and girls



- **74% of women and girls, aged 15-49, have undergone some form of female genital mutilation (FGM)** (decreasing very slowly over the years)
- **63% of women in Ethiopia are married before the age of 18**, 8% were married before their 15th birthday – different factors:
  - Forms: arranged marriage, abduction and free-choice
- **Girls start their school late**, there are gap years due to conflict and displacement
- **High drop out rates:** primary completion at Grade 8 is slightly above 50%
- **Only 34% of pregnant women receive ANC services with lowest (10%) rate of births attended** by a skilled health professional in the region
  - Early child bearing more risks
- **Conflict-related sexual violence, mass rapes and other forms of GBV**
- Still limited land and property ownership, especially in rural areas
- Almost 30% of adolescent girls are forced to migrate due to lack of work

# Situation of women and girls - consequences



- Health needs and risks – **access to maternity health services limited**
- **FGM** – risk of complications for health
- **Protection risks** overwhelming due to conflict and displacement
- **Impact on mental health – extremely high rate of PTSD** -> repeated trauma leads to cPTSD due to recurring violence events
- **Limited access to education OR education stopped earlier**
- **Effects of self-efficacy**, voice and decision-making
- **Early marriage** and **marriage as result of rape**
- **Large scale of migration** – for jobs or/and to run away from marriage
- **Sexual violence** leads to suicide, mental health problems, isolation and discrimination in the society
- **Culture of avoidance** to access MHPSS services
- **Deteriorating social fabric** and resources to cope with trauma
- **Limited livelihood opportunities** further deteriorated by natural disasters, lack of land property or lack of productive assets



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# ETHIOPIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, SOCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (CARITAS ETIOPIA)



- Social ministry arm of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia
- The National Office oversees the activities of 13 diocesan offices and 59 project offices, coordinating humanitarian and development work across the country
- 187 projects in 2025, more than 6M people reached

- Humanitarian Response
- Food Security and Resilience
- Health
- Education
- Women and Family Affairs
- Migration, IDPs and Refugees

## SUPPORTING PARTNERS FROM EU MEMBER STATES

Caritas Austria

Caritas Belgium

Caritas Germany

Caritas Italiana

Caritas Netherlands (**Cordaid**)

Caritas Poland

Caritas Slovenia

Caritas Spain

Caritas Switzerland

**CST** – joint mission of Catholic Agency for Overseas Development – Caritas for England and Wales (**CAFOD**) and Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (**SCIAF**), Caritas Ireland (**Trócaire**)

# CARITAS POLAND PROGRAM WITH CARITAS ETHIOPIA



I. School feeding program in 34 schools.

II. Improvement of access to WASH infrastructure and services, including hygiene supplies for girls.

III. TRAUMA SENSITIVE SCHOOLS - MHPSS mainstreaming and targeted activities for children in schools and teachers.

IV. MHPSS capacity building in response to war-related trauma to adults, especially women affected by sexual violence, trauma-informed livelihood program.

# TRAUMA INFORMED SERVICES

required concept in programming



**Through knowledge  
and understanding of trauma  
and stress we can act  
compassionately and take  
well-informed steps towards  
healing and impactful  
programming.**

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# TRAUMA SENSITIVE SCHOOLS – MAIN ACTIVITIES



**Training to enhance staff knowledge about trauma**

**Trauma-informed school policing and infrastructure approaches**

**Trauma-informed discipline and conflict resolution policies**

**Training school staff in emotional support and crisis response**

**Provision of targeted PSS activities for children affected by trauma**

**Engaging parents and caregivers of children experiencing challenges**

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# TRAUMA INFORMED SERVICES

## ROAD TO MORE EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMING



- ✓ **Trauma has impact on people in the presence – it is widespread**
- ✓ Service providers and **staff are also affected by trauma** – we can do our work better
- ✓ **One cannot have quality life** with re-experiencing events, being hypervigilant, not feeling safe in the present moment, having challenges with daily functioning
- ✓ **Trauma = lack of trust, isolation, helplessness, feeling shameful and guilty**
- ✓ We can try to **stop re-traumatisation** of the people that we serve
- ✓ Understanding symptoms of trauma helps us to support more effectively, for example:
  - ✓ Supporting children in **school performance** and becoming children again
  - ✓ Breaking the cycle of avoidance **improves physiology** (sleeping, rest, health)
  - ✓ Better functioning means **improved learning, understanding and action**
  - ✓ Healing could mean **better memory and planning** for livelihood activities and work
  - ✓ Re-connecting to society means **better resources and support systems**
  - ✓ Getting support leads to **better quality caregiving and parenting skills**
  - ✓ Leaving „trauma-time” takes us **back to the presence and future**
  - ✓ Restoring trust in self and self-efficacy **gives us back control over our life**
  - ✓ Better functioning means having **voice and empowerment**

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# Thank you!



Nina Mocior  
Head of Department of International Cooperation

[nmocior@caritas.org.pl](mailto:nmocior@caritas.org.pl)  
+48 532 475 694

ul. Okopowa 55  
01-043 Warszawa  
Poland