



Impact Update: Sustaining Hope and Charity at All Saints of Africa

CatholicCare Social Services established the All Saints of Africa Centre in 2013 to address the growing needs of the African community living within the Blacktown Local Government Area and surrounding areas in the Diocese of Parramatta.

All Saints of Africa Centre provides a voice for African people and models Africans and Australians living and learning in harmony together.

Located at 63 Allawah Street, Blacktown, the drop-in centre supports African refugees and migrants in areas such as trauma and loss of family, resettlement issues, language and cultural barriers, behaviour management of children, unemployment, and lack of financial skills.

The All Saints of Africa service is supported by three staff, two of whom are African. Rafa Godo has worked for the centre since it opened.

“It is wonderful being able to help people with a similar background to me,” Rafa said. “I feel a strong connection and due to this am able to show empathy. They instantly feel safe, knowing that I have been in their position and have come out smiling.”



Helping to Build Community

The service provides much needed information, advice and referrals to services for immigration; the law; financial services; family, relationship and marriage support; housing, parenting groups and educational sessions.

We provide practical support and assistance in supporting people to complete application forms, accompanying them to service appointments, interpreting, language support and advocating on their behalf.

Advocacy and Accessing Community Support

All Saints of Africa Centre works collaboratively with Baulkham Hills Community Aid once a week and Youth Resolution once a fortnight for two hours, to maximise support for the African community in need.

This holistic approach to support includes financial assistance and material aid to young persons living with their families and household and living expenses including paying bills and securing home furnishings.

Baulkham Hills Community Aid provides a No Interest Loans Scheme as a form of alternative credit for people to purchase essential items such as a fridge, washing machine, television, and household necessities. It is a flexible scheme that meets the needs of individuals, families, and young people.



Community Hub

The Community Hub works directly with primary schools and African families. The program assists families with learning how the education system works and the importance of how parents interact with the schools and teachers.

Many families have not experienced schooling growing up in their homeland. As a result of this program, families are now comfortable with being more involved with their children's education and the children are becoming more confident within the schools.

Educational programs are also provided for school children; as well as information sessions, homework support, and help with school stationery and uniform needs.

Supported Playgroup and Children's Education

All Saints of Africa Centre runs playgroup activities for children. The group meets weekly during school term and enables parents to learn the importance of play and interacting with their children in a positive way.

Frances, Group Facilitator, has been conducting a successful playgroup program on Thursday mornings since 2013. With the assistance of volunteers, she has been able to provide a Graduation certificate and morning tea celebration for each group of children who are beginning primary school in the new year.



Mums' Group

This group assists mums by providing information on a range of topics that support families with the settlement process into Australian society. Topics include healthy eating and women's health care, Centrelink and Australian Taxation Office information sessions. This group also enables African women to interact with other parents and community groups who reside in Western Sydney.

Sacramental Programs

Faith plays an important part for the families accessing our services. The All Saints of Africa Centre offers Bible study groups, dance groups and choir.

One program that has created a very strong sense of belonging within our hub is the dance group for parents and children. Run once a week by volunteers, the dance group has created a place for families to feel less isolated and experience a sense of togetherness. It gives them a space where they can relax, share their personal stories, and feel they are accepted for who and what they are.

Growing Together

All Saints of Africa Centre also has a community garden which allows people to grow fresh, nourishing produce and to participate activity in positive community-based activities.

*“The service helps me a lot.
The playgroup for the
children I joined – so many
group sessions, for example
women's health. It gives me a
good opportunity to do
volunteer work. Thanks Rafa
for everything you do for us.”*

– Nagla, All Saints of Africa
community participant.





Project Afriq Program for Parents and Adolescents

One of the main problems facing the African community in the Blacktown area is the separation/dislocation of the family unit due to relationship breakdown between parents and children as they make their way in a new land and a new culture.

CatholicCare counsellors and community workers identified cultural parenting issues as a barrier to intergenerational harmony within the African community and a key factor in the difficulties African adolescents face in the wider Australia community.

The burden of parenting falls heavily on women in African cultures. Project Afrique provides a space of safety and trust in which Africans, and particularly African women, can explore these issues and negotiate cultural differences to the benefit of all.

It is hopeful the Project Afriq program, for which you have so kindly provided funding, will begin in the third school term this year, depending on government restrictions.

Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the planned program had to be put on hold and has been delayed. We did consider running part of the program via Zoom but due to cultural sensitivities and many of the African community's

lack of access to the requisite information technology, engagement would have been very difficult and limited.

The program will be presented by:

- External specialist trauma counsellors; motivational speakers; mental health specialists, FACS, Police NSW, local multi-cultural centre
- CatholicCare counsellors and family support staff
- Graduates of the Mamre English classes who have moved on to further study and employment

Group facilitators have already reached capacity for the first Project Afriq intake. The program will include speakers from the local Police and Family and Community Services to help provide guidance for parents dealing with family conflicts arising from adolescent children adapting to a new culture, peer socialisation, school environments, and becoming detached and distanced from their parents and their expected values and principles.

Supporting the African Community

It is with thanks to your kind-hearted compassion and faithful support of our ministries that we can give African families a more positive, empowered, educated life in Australia; and help our brothers and sisters in need. *We are deeply grateful for your support and accompaniment.*



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For further information contact:
Dianne Wigan, Head of Fundraising
Phone: 02 8838 3443
Email: yourfoundation@parracatholic.org
PO Box 3094 North Parramatta NSW 1750

For further information contact:
Peter Loughnane, Executive Director
Phone: 02 8843 2500
Email: enquiries@ccss.org.au
PO Box 1050, St Marys NSW 1790