GUIDE FOR WALKS

WHY WALK?

Development and Peace — Caritas Canada (DPCC) joins the global ***Turn Debt into Hope*** campaign, which is organized under the Jubilee 2025 theme, *Pilgrims of Hope*.

In solidarity with our sisters and brothers who live in countries of the Global South that are facing a debt crisis, we invite you to walk in your community. To reflect on issues of debt, we propose a pilgrimage that makes stops at four symbolic places:

1. A CHURCH

2. A SCHOOL

3. A HOSPITAL

4. A FINANCIAL INSTITUTION

Your itinerary can actually include these four places, or you can opt for a shorter pilgrimage, stopping four times to reflect together on the information in the fact sheets below.

The first explanatory sheet can be read by a pilgrim at each station. To accompany pilgrims in their reflections, posters can be printed (11" x 17" format) and stuck onto placards.

At the end of the pilgrimage, you can conduct a ***Relay of Hope*** by passing a flame from candle to candle and voicing a message of solidarity for people facing the challenges of living in heavily indebted countries in the Global South.

Don't forget to ask participants to sign the petition. Have a **hard copy** on hand or have people scan the QR code off a campaign poster to sign the petition online at **devp.org/debt**.

Enjoy your walk!

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School

In heavily indebted, impoverished countries, education becomes a major challenge. When governments spend huge parts of public budgets on repaying loans, they cannot devote enough funds to building schools, hiring teachers, supplying teaching materials and improving access to quality public education. Extreme poverty can also force families to send children to work instead of school. This worsens illiteracy and inequity. It also creates a vicious cycle that makes it harder for younger generations to break out of poverty.

According to a **UNESCO report**, 251 million children are still out of school. In low-income countries, a third of school-aged children and youths are out of school, compared to only 3 per cent in high-income countries. Over half of the world's out-of-school children and adolescents are in sub-Saharan Africa. On average, low-income countries spend 155 times less per learner on education than high-income countries[1]. This underinvestment reduces access to education and helps preserve social and economic inequalities in the Global South. Undereducated citizens also make countries more vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation by powerful domestic and Western interest groups.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia shows signs of really wanting to improve education for its citizens. Last year, it increased its national education budget by 11 per cent to reach over 1.4 billion U.S. dollars[2]. But at the same time, Ethiopia had to spend more than 2 billion U.S. dollars on servicing its debts[3]. This high debt cost leaves the government with few resources to upgrade schools, hire teachers or provide quality learning materials. Many more Ethiopian kids are now in school. But schools are often overcrowded, teachers are poorly paid, and learning conditions remain difficult. The added problems of poor infrastructure and transport lead to much lower literacy rates in rural and deprived areas.

So, although Ethiopia has made significant progress in terms of access to education, its debt burden remains a major obstacle that compromises the quality of education and limits opportunities for future generations.

[1] https://t.ly/4DBjY
[2] https://t.ly/YSP0u
[3] https://t.ly/aOj7_

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Poster – School - Ethiopia:

Ethiopia

In a camp for internally displaced persons in Mekelle, Ethiopia, Development and Peace — Caritas Canada's partner, the *Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul*, provided food, dignity kits and psychosocial support to 568 women and children. Among them were Ade and her five-year-old daughter, Melati. They had fled the conflict in West Tigray. Ade says **the assistance they received saved their lives**.

Struggling for basic survival, Ade used to not place much importance on education. Now, however, she has come to understand the value of education and childcare services. She hopes that the children in the camp will get to enjoy full-day schooling some day, rather than only the half days they are offered now. That would allow her to find work to support her family.

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#JUBILEE 2025 TURN DEBT INTO Hope DEVP.ORG

Financial institution

Do you remember the Jubilee of 2000? Back then, the global *Drop the Debt* campaign was a resounding success. It drove the cancelling of over $100 billion in foreign debt for 36 of the world's most impoverished countries.

So why are dozens of countries in the Global South once again facing a debt crisis? It's because the global economic system does not tackle the root causes of unsustainable debt. Poorer countries can only get loans at very high interest rates. The loans also often come with conditions that favour creditors to the detriment of the borrowing countries' citizens. Borrower countries are often forced to modify their economies. For example, they have to privatize essential services like water, or use farmland to grow cash crops for export instead of growing food crops to feed the people.

The debt crisis has worsened with the economic effects of the pandemic, global inflation and rising interest rates. These have also made debt repayment even more difficult. Without international debt cancellation or restructuring mechanisms, many countries cannot repay their loans or invest in development and essential services like health care and education.

Thomas Sankara, the former president of Burkina Faso, understood the root causes of debt. He also saw debt cancellation as a life-and-death matter. He said, "The origins of debt date back to the origins of colonialism. Those who lent us money are the same people who colonised us. The debt cannot be repaid because, first of all, *if we do not pay, our lenders will not die. Of that we can be sure. On the other hand, if we pay, we will die. Of that too we can be sure.*[4]"

Tunisia

Tunisia is confronting an acute debt crisis. In 2023, it had external debts of more than US$41 billion[5]. This was over three-fourths the size of its entire economy[6]! Interest payments alone were nearly US$5 billion[7], or about a fifth of what the country earned from exports[8]. The Tunisian government knew that it could not borrow more money to repay its loans without implementing harsh cuts to public services. So, it opted instead to borrow internally and increase the tax burden on an already struggling people. Tunisians cannot do much about rising poverty and inequity and the shrinking social safety net because the government is becoming increasingly opaque and authoritarian.

[4] https://t.ly/Ue2ra
[5] https://t.ly/lk13I
[6] https://t.ly/ROx50
[7] https://t.ly/OO61G
[8] https://t.ly/TBr25

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Poster - Financial institution - Tunisia:

Financial institution

Photo: March of the counter-summit of social movements during the meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Marrakesh, October 2023. (Credit: OTE)

Did you know?

Impoverished countries **get locked into debt cycles** because they are forced to borrow at much higher interest rates than rich countries.

Tunisia

Development and Peace — Caritas Canada's partner, the *Tunisian Economic Observatory* (OTE), analyzes Tunisia's debt and economic policies. It identifies governmental mismanagement and unfair conditions imposed by international creditors. Through workshops and advocacy, OTE empowers citizens to understand complex issues and demand fairer policies and sustainable economic alternatives. This fosters a more just and inclusive approach to the economy that can benefit all Tunisians.

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Church

Ten years ago, the late Pope Francis called us to an "ecological conversion" in his historic encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. He wrote, "The foreign debt of poor countries has become an instrument of control," adding that there is "a real 'ecological debt', particularly between North and South...."

Pope Leo XIV has noted that his predecessor's concerns about the two types of debt are especially resonant in this Jubilee year[9]. Historically during jubilees, debts were cancelled, slaves were freed, and the land was left to rest (Lev. 25; Deut. 15). That is why Development and Peace — Caritas Canada is joining Caritas Intenationalis, KAIROS Canada and many others around the world in the global ***Turn Debt into Hope*** campaign. Together, we are echoing Pope Francis's call to "*forgive the debts* of countries that will never be able to repay them." We are also advocating for alternatives to what Pope Leo XIV has called "an economic paradigm that exploits the Earth's resources and marginalizes the poorest."[10]

Ecological debt

We owe our sisters and brothers in the Global South an "ecological debt" because our countries have mostly grown rich by exploiting the labour and resources of countries in Global South. Our extractive industries' activities in the Global South and our consumerist economic model have severely harmed the environment. This has driven the climate change whose worst effects are felt by the countries of the Global South that are least responsible for causing it.

Peru

In mining-friendly Peru, extractive industries make up almost 15 per cent of the economy and over 60 per cent of exports[11]. But 30 per cent of Peruvians live below the national poverty line[12]. Mining also leaves a trail of environmental degradation, conflict and human rights abuses. It adds to the ecological debt that wealthy countries benefitting from mining owe to local populations that suffer its harms.

[9] https://t.ly/X9XDw
[10] https://t.ly/MKlfO
[11] https://t.ly/qi-ED
[12] https://t.ly/kJhjd

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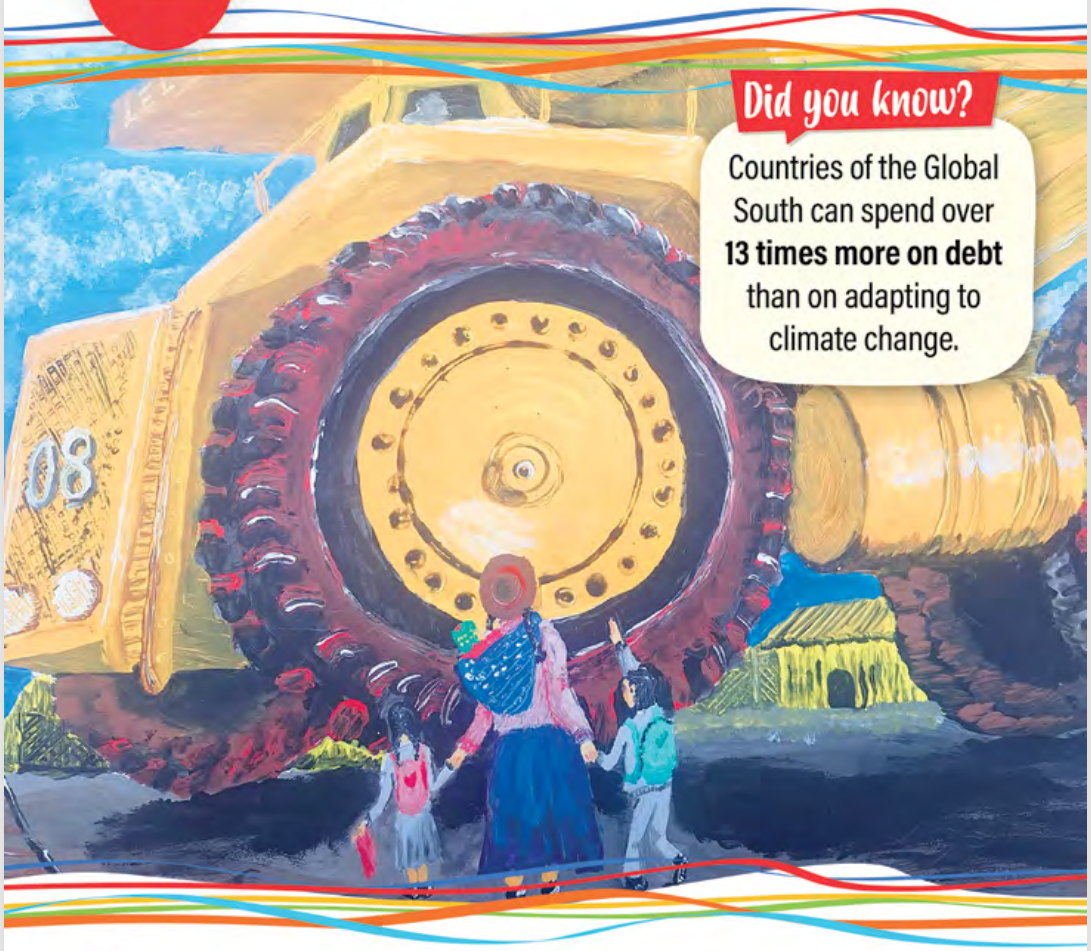
Poster – Church - Peru

Church



Peru

Development and Peace — Caritas Canada's partners, the *Episcopal Commission for Social Action* (CEAS) and the *Institut Bartolomé de Las Casas* (IBC) work with communities affected by the unscrupulous exploitation of their natural resources. Through training and advocacy, they equip people to understand and defend their rights and protect their future.

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Hospital

Some 3.4 billion people live in countries that paid more in interest on debts than they invested in health care[13]. International creditors force indebted countries to prioritize debt repayment. This stifles their capacity to invest in public health. It results in a lack of trained personnel, underequipped hospitals, medicine shortages and sapped health systems. Poor health care increases maternal and child mortality and the risk of preventable diseases. Precarious work conditions force many health workers to seek better jobs abroad. Ultimately, countries weakened by debt end up dependent on aid agencies to meet their citizens' health care needs.

Sudan

Sudan is in a complex crisis that the United Nations has deemed catastrophic. A civil war raging since April 2023 has displaced over 10 million people internally and 4 million into neighbouring countries[14] . A famine has also been officially declared in Sudan. Some 25.6 million people—more than half the population—are in acute food insecurity[15]. Hunger and displacement have also been driven by earlier conflicts, disease outbreaks, economic and political instability and climate disasters.

Sudan's debts are over 2.5 times the size of its entire economy[16]. This reduces the state's capacity to help the millions who have lost homes, livelihoods and loved ones to conflict and other hardships. This year, over 60 per cent of Sudan's people will need aid[17].

[13] https://t.ly/RUTlA
[14] https://t.ly/j5kj6
[15] https://t.ly/6F3jh
[16] https://t.ly/Ugsst
[17] https://t.ly/-4gow

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Poster – Hospital - Sudan

Hospital

Did you know?

The World Bank estimates that low-income countries spend **more on debt servicing than on health and education combined**!

Sudan

In South Kordofan State, Development and Peace — Caritas Canada's support allowed our partner *Trócaire* to provide cash assistance to vulnerable families. Most used the money to buy food, some bought household items and clothes, and others paid for medical services. With Canadian Foodgrains Bank funding arranged by us, Trócaire also provides therapeutic food and treatment to malnourished women and children at 17 health facilities.

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TO CLOSE THE PILGRIMAGE

To complete your pilgrimage, you could hold a ***Relay of Hope***, exchanging the flame of a candle and formulating your prayers and wishes to ***Turn Debt into Hope***.

Take the time to thank your participants and encourage them one last time to sign the petition. Here's a text to help you:

Thank you to each and every one of you for walking with us today. Your solidarity shows policymakers and creditors that Canadians want justice when it comes to debt.

If you haven't already done so, please sign the global petition by scanning this QR code [on the campaign poster]**, visiting devp.org/debt or signing here** [indicate where the **paper petition** can be found]**.**

Together, let's put people and planet first! Call on creditors and world leaders to:

1. **Stop the debt crisis by cancelling and remedying unjust and unsustainable debts.**
2. **Prevent further debt crises by reforming the global financial system.**
3. **Establish a debt resolution mechanism within the United Nations.**

Sign and share the petition!
devp.org/debt

Thank you for walking in solidarity!