

Vox Populi

18 August 2022

In the current socio-economic climate it is understandable we focus on cost of living increases at the supermarket and at the pump, increasing interest rates, rises in utility costs, inflation and a shortage of a whole range of goods. All these factors are also key determinants of health. Having access to material and social resources and being an active member of society are all important factors for maintaining good health.

However, this week a revised list of humanitarian crises around the world from a number of relief, aid and rescue agencies was jolting.

At certain times during every year the direct impact of international events is brought into sharp focus in our media. It may be violent conflict, political unrest, food insecurity, water scarcity, human trafficking, displaced children and families. The COVID-19 pandemic has alone reversed decades of progress.

This year, 274 million people worldwide are dependent on humanitarian aid.

Aid agencies now rank their humanitarian programs most in need. Some of the countries and regions always seem to be on the list – Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, Yemen, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Myanmar, Somalia and Ethiopia. Others not so familiar such as Central Sahel with the countries of Burkina Feso and Niger.

And more recently Ukraine. The Russian invasion of Ukraine started on 24 February this year.

Official UN figures put the death toll at more than 5,000, wounded at more than 7,000 and an estimated 13 million people displaced inside Ukraine and more than five million people seeking refuge in another country.

Will we ever know the real toll? Or the long-term toll on the mental health of the people of Ukraine?

A further development this week from international political observers – could the next site of Russian-fuelled conflict be Bosnia-Herzegovina?

The issues are complex and occur in areas that great powers either influence or increase their objective to become an even greater force.

We may well ask what can we do here, in our Diocese of Broken Bay that can make any difference.

We can pray.

Our own challenges are many, varied and real, however Bishop Anthony Randazzo has asked we also remember in our prayers the people who cannot complain about the price of food because there is none, or the cost of housing or education because there is none.

He has asked that as missionary disciples we open our hearts in prayer for those living in an often hurtful and neglectful world so different to ours.