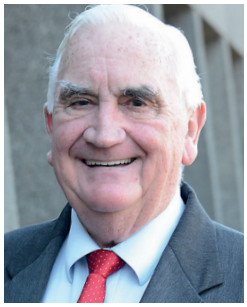
Salesian Mission *UPDATE*

APRIL 2020



Dear Friend,

In these challenging times in which we live, I hope you are well and that you will stay well?

The current COVID-19 crisis has certainly given us a new impetus for prayer – we pray daily for our donors and those who they are assisting in poorer nations.

I share with you an update on some of our work.

You will appreciate that our partners overseas have much less capacity to tackle this global crisis and our support is more important than ever.

I hope you will be able to continue to help us in our relief projects and especially through your prayers.

Yours sincerely in St John Bosco.

Br Michael Lynch
Director

Join Us in Prayer



Salesian Missions Australia stands in solidarity with all those around the world who have had their lives impacted by COVID-19. Join us as we offer prayers of healing for the ill and thanks for emergency workers during these trials.

Please take a moment now to join us in prayer and submit your special intention via our website. Click on the links below.

Food shortage in East Timor due to the impact of drought



A drought in East Timor has impacted may parts of the country especially as they rely on subsistence farming for both food and income. Fr Trans from the Don Bosco Agricultural College in Fuiloro reports, "A long summer with very little rain has reduced both feed for the animals and produce for the community, boarders and surrounding villages. Due to the lack of reliable rain we were unable to sow corn this year and many of our plantings have dried up. This certainly will affect our ability to provide food for 2020. We have increased the volume of rice purchased which is very costly".

The Maria Auxiliadora Medical Clinic remains the only facility to provide medical care to patients and villages in the Venilale district, their services are in great demand at this critical time. Funds are used to purchase medicines, milk powder for babies and salaries. Almost 9000 patients are consulted each year, mainly for skin conditions, malnutrition and tuberculosis.



India and their current situation in light of Covid-19

India is in total lockdown with the corona virus crisis. Salesians are extremely concerned with the effect on at least 20% of the needy poor from city slums.

Fr Shalbin, in Bangalore writes that masks are being made at Don Bosco Schools with tailoring centres and supplied at cost to hospitals and government offices. These are distributed freely to the public, vendors, drivers and shopkeepers.

Food Kits containing essentials are given to the most deserving families, persons without access to government-provided food grains and migrants who are stranded due to travel bans. Don Bosco Schools in various locations are being utilised by the government as infrastructure and facilities for the isolation and treatment of patients. Other buildings are used by support staff who have nowhere to go due to the strict lockdown.



In Mumbai, Fr Edwin D'Souza informs us that the Salesians are offering the marginalised youngsters safety in shelters. Staff members and domestic staff, who come from very poor localities are also being assisted with full salaries to help them and their families. When the lockdown is lifted the Salesians will be able to extend their support services to others in need.

Online services for children and students, who are confined to their homes and have access to internet facilities, are offered activities such as competitions, games and quizzes. Tele-counselling, medical advice and spiritual support are also organised with the help of priests, professional counsellors and doctors.

Fiji - A touching Video highlighting a Community Centre for All





The Australian Salesian Missions Overseas Aid Fund has released a new video that celebrates the progress of a significant milestone in its Pacific Project – Fiji Youth and Educational Centre.

This Centre will be a wonderful facility that will provide young people with a place to visit and feel at home; a place where they can learn, live and laugh. 44% of the population in Fiji are under the age of 25 with very few opportunities for employment. It will include a multipurpose community space, open areas for learning, kitchen and dining area, sporting and recreational facility and a community garden. These facilities will create a central hub where young people will be able to meet in a safe environment and grow as they walk accompanied by their peers and their Salesian mentors.

Parish priest Fr Mikaere Leilua is overseeing the project and expresses his deep gratitude to all donors. The project is now well underway, having suffered setbacks related to wet weather and delays, however it is now full steam ahead!

The video can be viewed on YouTube and those who have contributed to the project are encouraged to share the video with their friends, families and communities. It is hoped that the construction of this centre will be a turning point for the Salesians in Fiji, providing them with even greater means of empowering the local communities.

To view the video, please click on the links below.

To help support the Pacific Appeal, please click on the links below.

Samoa - Don Bosco Alafua enrols first female students



Seven female students have made history by becoming the first women to study at Don Bosco Technical College at Alafua. Luagutu Nofoasa Vaitagutu jumped at the chance to join the Don Bosco school. "When I heard that Don Bosco was allowing girls to be part of the school, I wanted to join and to learn about other courses which are not offered to us in College."

The Don Bosco Technical college is held in high regard amongst the people of Samoa; it has an extremely successful school-to-employment rate (95% of graduates from last year have found jobs already) and is extremely affordable, even offering scholarships to the poorest of the poor who without education, would be stuck in the cycle of inter-generational poverty.

At 18 years old, Luagutu has a renowned sense of optimism about her schooling having transferred studies from Faleata College so she may follow her dream. "I want to become a mechanic and I also like the fact that the tuition fee is affordable for my family," she said.

"Many of our students attend school on scholarships – these opportunities are for vulnerable students who do not have the financial support to cover school fees" said Principal Mane Su'a. The first 30 underprivileged female applicants to the hospitality course will receive such scholarships to assist with their fees.

"A good future is all we're aiming for and what we hope to achieve during our time here in Don Bosco." The girls join a thriving school community that has 200 students, 23 teachers and offers courses in carpentry, electrical, plumbing, welding and automotive fields.

State of Emergency in Samoa, 1st Measles Epidemic Now Covid-19

During November 2019 the small nation of Samoa experienced a measles epidemic which placed them into a State of Emergency, closing all services including schools. The two Don Bosco schools were used as venues during the governments mandatory vaccination drive to curb the spread to save lives. The epidemic eventually claimed 83 lives, mostly children under the age of two. There were over 5700 cases equalling 3% of the population.

Currently due to Covid-19, boarders are closed and gatherings have been limited to 5 people as medical facilities are limited. The impact of the measles outbreak and current pandemic will be sorely felt for years.