

Helping youth build a better future

Salesian Missions NEWS JUNE 2023

ON THE GROUND IN AN EMERGENCY

Don Bosco Salesians, staff and volunteers in **Ukraine** continue to assist locals who have been cut off due to the war with welcomed food, clothing, supplies and other essential needs. Refugees (mainly women and children) who have fled to neighbouring countries have been assisted with safe shelter and a place where they can receive the support services they require. We thank *Viatores Cum Christo* for sponsoring the refurbishment and renovation of ten self-contained rooms for refugees in Poland. This will be used as short stay accommodation while refugees transition to a more permanent location. Recently we have been asked to partner with overseas Salesians to redevelop a bunker to shelter 750 people during bomb raids. This space will later be used as an education centre, however, for the present it will offer a safe place to the locals. As other urgent needs come to hand we will endeavour to support the relief efforts.

Ongoing conflict in the North of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** (DRC) has seen 5.8million people leave there homes and villages in search of safety. Fr Aurelien Mukangwa, who is overseeing the situation informed us of the developing Emergency. In a matter of days over 19,000 internally displaced people (IDP's) settled around *Don Bosco Ngangi* in **Goma** in need of shelter and nutritional support. The Salesians are doing as much as they can with the limited assistance they have received. The IDP are challenged by harsh living conditions, with little personal belongings and shelters constructed from banana leaves acquired from the surrounding plantations. We will continue to support the Salesians in their efforts to care and provide for refugee community.

Since the launch of our **Syrian Earthquake Appeal**, we have received reports of the meetings that have taken place to co-ordinate the relief response in Aleppo and surrounding areas. The relief efforts have included the distribution of meals, education support to refugee children, the organising of summer activities and recreation for psychosocial support, counselling for those who have lost family members, and more recently a program to assist people with visa applications is being discussed and will be implemented soon. In the meantime, donated funds have been used to assist a number of these projects.

Dear Friends of Salesian Mission

Together we break the cycle of poverty and give youth opportunities through the more than 5,500 Salesian educational institutions and youth centres around the world. Whether it's providing social support, accompanying refugees during civil unrest or assisting the homeless, Salesians of Don Bosco are on the front lines educating youth on their rights and ensuring access to programs and services they need.

As we face the soaring costs of living so do many of our communities where we work. Prices of basic commodities, especially fuel and food have almost doubled in some regions, impacting the management of Don Bosco schools. This has been due to the economic crises after the COVID-19 pandemic and the change of weather that has caused food scarcity.

We are forever grateful for your assistance and hope that you may continue to partner with us by supporting our projects.

I would also like to thank those who have recently made donations, your ongoing support is making a difference.



Kind regards
Tina Newton
Director



India

Throughout India the Salesians of Don Bosco are making a positive impact by continuing to focus on the care of street children, education for all, building strong communities through local collaboration, the empowerment of minority groups and providing opportunities in remote villages.



Fr Thomas Vattukulam was pleased to report that the **Bangalore Mission** supported the "*Rain water Harvesting*" program at the Don Bosco College by supplying large tanks. At Don Bosco Mithra school, educational stationery and uniforms were supplied to disadvantaged children as well as scholarships to help continue their studies. In addition, school furniture was provided to schools in North Karnataka and children were sponsored under the '*Save a Life Programme*" at Don Bosco Mysore.

In Bangalore the empowerment of local voices continues to be encouraged to assist individuals and communities to negotiate factors that impact their lives and livelihoods. *Child labour* is discouraged by offering education and this process is at the heart of all social work. It is part of a means to support vulnerable children and communities on their journey for equality.

During World Environment Day, Don Bosco Salesians in Bangalore successfully facilitated a program to promote Living Sustainably in Harmony with Nature across 15 districts in Karnataka. 1928 saplings of various fruits and other trees were planted by 9987 children.

In **Mumbai**, Fr Edwin D'Souza reports that in partnership with local agencies, Don Bosco support for "*street children*" projects includes the delivery of education and technical training programs accompanied with life coping skills to enhance future employment opportunities.

In the provinces of Gujarat and Maharashtra, tribal villages benefit from self-help projects including the establishment of small poultry and goat farming businesses to enable remote communities earn an income and provide food in these drought-stricken areas.

The *Youth Peace Convention* was held in **Guwahati** and attended by 350 youth leaders. Training, knowledge and experiences were shared with the aim to prevent violence and work towards peaceful social cohesion that involves negotiation and reconciliation.

It is with sadness that we inform you of Fr Thomas Vailatt's passing on the 15th March, 2023 at 93 years old. Many of you would know his great work and contribution to the Don Bosco Salesians in Bangalore for many years and his several visits to Australia. May he rest in peace.

Vietnam

With generous fundraising activities organised by various groups our work in Vietnam has continued, providing food staples for flood victims and others who are on the poverty line. Children have been given the opportunity to attend school by having their tuition covered whilst others have been granted scholarships for higher education purposes. The elderly in one of the Nursing homes were visited and given small gifts and some wheelchairs were donated.



Salesian schools, services and programs throughout Vietnam are helping to break the cycle of poverty while giving many young people hope for a more positive and productive future. Salesian vocational and technical schools equip students with the skills they need to compete in the local labour market by offering courses that lead to employment in construction, hotel management, electrical and mechanical engineering, computer science, and other fields. Many Salesian students are school dropouts seeking a second chance.

According to the World Bank, close to 14% of Vietnam's population lives in conditions of poverty. The country has seen a drastic reduction of poverty over the last 20 years when the poverty rate was close to 60%. Vietnam has also made remarkable progress in education. Primary and secondary enrolments for those in poverty have reached more than 90% and 70% respectively.

Rising levels of education and diversification into off-farm activities such as working in construction, factories or domestic housework have also contributed to reducing poverty in the country. Salesian programs give impoverished children and families opportunities that are typically only available to the middle and upper classes so that all people can have hope for a better future.





Africa

Ethiopia's internal conflict within the Tigray region continues to present many challenges. Salesians are working with locals in delivering basic needs such as food, emergency shelter, medical supplies and hygiene facilities. For these vulnerable people, the ability to prepare food, store water and sleep safely goes a long way to improving their health status. Br Bullo wishes to thank you for your unconditional support, encouragement and welcomes your prayers to help alleviate the suffering of many.

The situation in South Sudan is critical as over 10,000 displaced people have been living in camps since 2013 with only basic shelters made from wood and whatever materials that can be found. We were pleased to assist with the purchase of waterproof sheeting to cover these refuges as the rainy season has commenced. Education remains a priority and is offered at the Don Bosco schools in Gumbo, Juba. Students residing in the camp are supplied with school stationery, materials, uniforms and sporting equipment. The children benefit from playing games in a safe environment, enjoy team sports and laugh together amid so much poverty and uncertainty.

Fr Uba explains that creating opportunities for the 75,000 residents at the Refugee Camp in Palabek, Uganda is a priority. Currently Fr Uba is seeking assistance to provide Don Bosco scholarships to about 140 children and young people, many girls, to attend Catholic Educational Centres outside the refugee camp. This is a unique opportunity as there are limited schools within the camp. Many children walk long distances to attend school, most of the time without food and with very little support. We are hoping to raise $17,000 to make the scholarships a reality.





Timor Leste

With donated funds we are very pleased to assist the many projects in Timor Leste, including the Schools, Vocational and Technical Centres, Orphanages, Medical Clinic and other Community development projects.

The Salesians of Don Bosco are making a great impact mainly through education and ensuring the curriculum and technical trades taught directly transfer to job related skills.

With the support of the O'Brien Foundation Australia, two new classrooms are being constructed at the Don Bosco Technical School in Fatumaca and an upgrading of the electrical course to include Solar Panel installations at Don Bosco Maliana.

An essential part of the school programs is to provide scholarships to marginalised youth from poor families who otherwise would not have the opportunity to an education. This can only happen with your generosity. It is with grateful thanks we acknowledge The Ron Archer Foundation for providing scholarships to students at Don Bosco Comoro, St Jude's Parish, Langwarren and Friends of Luro for sponsoring students at the Don Bosco Agricultural School in Fuiloro and Michael Parker Foundation who funded students at Fatumaca.

The Salesian Sisters Orphanage in the mountainous region of Venilale, is home to 100 girls from the ages 6-16 who attend the local Salesian Schools. Funds were sent to make covers for 120 mattresses and provide for food and running costs. Currently, Sr Olga is seeking assistance with funds to repair and replace the ceiling and roof in the girl's dormitory bathroom as it leaks during the rainy season and water flows inside. Any assistance would be appreciated.

Don Bosco Training Centre in Comoro offers trade courses of certificate level one and two in General Constructions, Mechanics and Computer Administration. The Centre is accredited by the National Trade Qualifications and accredited for preparing construction students to work in Australia. Each year upon successful completion of the courses approximately 200 students gain employment in local organisations and also work in Australia.

In May 2023 a container filled with goods was shipped to Timor Leste and we especially thank the Men's Shed group co-ordinated by Jim Finlayson for providing large quantities of refurbished tools to be transported to assist with many school courses, building and gardening projects. We are very appreciative of our donors' continued support for these needy undertakings.

USED STAMPS:
Please note, we can no longer accept Used Stamps, as Mr Neville Miller is retired and unable to sort and sell stamps. Your past support has been very much appreciated.

Pacific

In February it was profoundly touching to experience first-hand the reality of life in Fiji and Samoa. The positive impact our two Samoan Schools and Fijian Centre are having on local youth and the communities they live amongst is inspiring.



In Fiji the **Don Bosco Youth and Education Centre in Suva** is a hub of activity with local youth gathering to learn, play and enjoy each other's company in a safe environment. It is about five hours away from the Fiji Resorts that most Australians know, amid settlements such as Muanikoso, where large families live in very basic dwellings. I was blessed with the opportunity to meet a number of families who welcomed me into their homes and shared their stories of hardship and hope. With the minimum wage increasing from $2.68 to $4.00 FJD an hour, the costs of living still remains a challenge. We hope that you can support the Salesians in their work with the community and their many needs.



It was a highlight to visit both **Don Bosco Schools in Samoa** which offer Technical Training Programs with a view to student obtaining a holistic education including english, mathematics, computer studies, leadership skills and spiritual growth. It was wonderful to meet all the staff and students during a traditional welcoming ceremony which demonstrated the great sense of pride that all Samoans hold for their culture and appreciation for the assistance they have received.

During my visit it was evident how vital the support for school programs is especially scholarships as many students come from families that experience financial hardship. School fees range from A$250 – A$600 per year plus additional fees for uniforms and supplies.

The ultimate aim of the schools is for students to obtain a formally recognised qualification and successfully find employment on the completion of their studies. Three-year courses are offered in electrical and electronics, carpentry, plumbing, metal fabrication, motor mechanics and more recently hospitality.

Tina Newton

BEQUESTS

Continue to make a difference

A bequest or legacy is a gift included in your Will. It is an act of generosity that can continue into future generations. By naming the Australian Salesian Mission Overseas Aid Fund (ASMOAF) as the beneficiary of a fixed cash amount or a percentage of the estate will ensure that the funds are dispersed to the project of your choice. For further information, please contact the Salesian Missions Office 03 9377 6060 or by e-mail salmiss@salesians.org.au or our website for more information.

ONLINE DONATIONS

Can be made through our secure website www.salesianmissionsaustralia.org.au

A tax-deductible receipt will be sent to your email address.

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Please contact the Saleian Missions Office for details.

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