

Marist Mission Newsletter
Spring September 2014, Vol.65, No.3



"HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL"



ON DISADVANTAGE & DISABILITY



The victims of 'throwaway cultures' are precisely the weakest and most fragile human beings...the poorest, the sick and the elderly, the seriously handicapped who are in danger of being 'thrown away' expelled from a system that must be efficient at all costs.

...it is necessary to raise awareness...especially among those in the field of politics, so that they may think in accord with the Gospel ...and act consistently by talking and collaborating with those who, in sincerity and intellectual honesty, share at least a similar vision of humankind and society... we must embrace with tender affection the whole of humanity, especially the poorest and weakest, the least important.

- Pope Francis

Marist Mission Centre

MMC Marist Partnerships prioritise Women and Children in small Communities within Asia-Pacific affected by Social, Mental and Physical Disadvantage, Poverty and Natural Disaster



Dear Friends and Benefactors,

Recently I left Australia to visit a Marist Brothers' program in Cambodia just as the vicious horror of ISIS terrorism hit our media headlines. *Marist Solidarity Cambodia*, better known as *La Valla - YODIFEE*, educates children living with severe physical disabilities in a land that suffered a brutal genocide rivalling ISIS terrorism.

The stark contrast of LaValla/YODIFEE with the current scourge of middle-eastern brutality could not be greater. La Valla/YODIFEE, in the words of Pope Francis, truly *"embraces with tender affection the poorest and weakest, the least important"*.

Your generous support enables MMC to partner our Australian Marist Brothers (Terry Heinrich & Tony Burrows) and their Khmer Marist Partners led by Ouch Nimul. Their gentle dedication is a powerful statement of a 'fair go' in a very unfair world. Let's keep all Marist Missionaries in our prayers. With thanks and God's blessings.

Kevin Stewart SM

SISTERS, BROTHERS, PRIESTS AND LAY-MARISTS WHERE HUMAN NEEDS ARE GREATEST

Marist Missionary Sisters (SMSM) in Bangladesh, Solomon Islands and Africa, Marist Sisters in Davao, Philippines, Our Lady of the Mission Sisters (RNDM) in Myanmar and Thailand and Oblates of Notre Dame Sisters (OND) in Philippines continue a long tradition of dedicated men and women on the front lines of human need especially where mothers and children are at risk.

Former doctor, Australian **Marist Missionary Sister Jenny Clark SMSM** (right) casts an experienced eye over a young charge in Dhaka, Bangladesh.



OVERCOMING SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE

Marist Sister Sheila SM (right) provides a free dental clinic for mothers and their Children at Balay Pasilungan, a Marist Centre for Street Kids in Philippines while fellow **Marist Sister Veronica SM** (above) visits the Centre where she spent many years.

Marist Fathers recently have re-taken responsibility for the Centre under the leadership of **Fr Lionel Mechavez SM** (above left) seen here above with Fr Harry Moore from the Australian Marist Fathers. **Cost of extensions: around \$75-80,000**



Sr Therese SMSM - St Isidro Centre, Aruligo, Solomon Is. for severely hearing and speech impaired youth. **Sister Julienne SMSM**, formerly in Bangladesh, writes:

*Thank you for accepting to give a stipend for **Sr. Therese Chaloux**. She certainly will be great asset at Aruligo, a wonderful woman with such a deep love of the Solomon Islands people. Therese will be 90 soon is still giving English classes a couple of days a week. That together with the stipends you give for **Sisters Sonia and Maria** will be sufficient to cover the needs of our community at Aruligo.*

*Would you be in agreement that the third stipend you have agreed to give to the Aruligo community, to our **Sister Akineti Naaru**, a young Kiribati Marist working at the Women's Refuge run by local Anglican Sisters, who are not able to pay Akineti at this time. Akineti, a qualified nurse is doing a great job providing basic health services and care to these abused women and their young children.*

How much is one stipend to support one Missionary Sister per year ? \$5,000

Marist Bishop John Bosco of Vanuatu with retired engineers **Geoff Henry** of MMC and **Robert Trainier** of Port Vila discussing options for restoring the old dormitory used for teacher training in Vanuatu which was partially destroyed by fire soon after previous renovations.

With teachers coming from the many remote islands for in-service training



Funds for renovation were almost totally consumed in undertaking the first restoration. 18 months on Bishop Bosco needs to upgrade his teachers. Engineers conducted a site inspection and will re-cycle what is still useful. **MMC hopes to co-contribute to this project still being costed around \$30-40,000.**



Marist Solidarity Cambodia

Fact sheet

La Valla School - 104 students (34 girls) aged 12-18 years all with physical disabilities.

96 live-in (31 girls) plus 8 day students.

Cost per day to provide 400 meals \$135

Accelerated primary program: 6 grades in 3 yrs. Students are poor - struggle to pay fees.

Annual Primary School Fees: \$11

Graduates July: 34 (27 boys, 7 girls).

A few students take higher education at home, others and some start vocational training in Phnom Penh or at YODIFEE. 39 on waiting list.

Priority is for those with greatest needs from poorest families committed to the programs.

(\$40 per year / \$55 for University courses.)

Physiotherapy & Health-Centre redeveloped

Essential facility for severely young disabled.

- 40 children per week regularly treated.
- Professional physios trained/hired.
- Using pool for hydrotherapy.
- 2 teams of doctors (Spain/USA) assisted.
- An MMC funded development: \$15,000

Good News

15 Teachers are to receive Government salaries (however, funds not yet released).

Two Questions challenge MSC given that all programs are basically all overseas-funded.

Succession/future financial sustainability ?
Sustaining the Marist ethos in programs ?

Our bottom line: MMC would like to renew its support until 2016. This will assist the Marist Brothers counter the danger that vulnerable children become once again disposable victims 'in a system pressured to be efficient at all costs'. But costs are a reality. Choices ?



Pope Francis again: "we must embrace with tenderness the poorest, the weakest and the least important". These Khmer children truly qualify!

Marist Brothers are searching for sustainable ways forward but it will take them more time and some creative thinking.

So can we help ?

MMC would like to commit \$50,000 for 2015 & again for 2016.

Since Fr Nissen's time, MMC has given YODIFEE LAVALLA annual grants of \$50,000 to respond to special needs at YODIFEE.



Home-work at La Valla



Br Tony Burrows offers advice.



Always time for a smile !



Home-work finished!



August Board Meeting in Phnom Penh

Education - investing in their future



My name is Shwe Zin Thin. I was born on 6 October, 1994 in Myanmar. I am a Burmese Muslim. What is a pity is that I do not know what my country looks like. I have been in Ranong, Thailand since I was three years old. I am now nineteen. My parents came to Ranong looking for work. On the first day we arrived, mom told me that my father got a job in a fish factory. The owner gave us a little space in the factory. My parents built a little room and we lived there.

I can remember that when I was five years, I asked my mom to send me to school. Unfortunately, there was no school or learning center for Burmese migrant children yet but my mom found one woman who was teaching a few children in an old tiny shanty shed. There was no book, pencil, eraser, pen. There was no light in our class. We used slate and slate pencil to write. If I wrote a mistake I just spit on the slate and used my finger to erase it. My life and education went this way for two years until I joined a learning Centre. I started to have an expectation. I told myself 'I will be a doctor when I grow up and I will repay my parent's efforts to feed me'.

When I was twelve my family moved from the fish factory to a place very far from my learning center. Mom said education is important for us, if you do not have an education, look at me for example. I have to work hard because I do not have an education.

My mom started to suffer from mental illness and could not work outside anymore. Then our neighbours expelled our family from that area. I could not do anything. I cried every night. In my family only my father was left to work and surely his amount of salary was not enough for us to live. Some days we did not have food to eat. I decided to leave from school and find a job. I was thirteen years old during that time so I worried that I would not get a job. Fortunately I got a job at Plaza. I was happy that I could help my father. At the same time I was extremely sad that I had to give up my education. I worked there for one year.



After that, I got a job at a drugstore. My time for work was from 8:00am to 10pm. There were many challenges. Sometime they used verbal violence on me. Sometimes I fell down from the bicycle due to the overweight of the medicine. One day, my boss ordered me to buy a coffee. I walked in to the coffee shop and found a person who changed my life. He was from Marist Ranong. He gave me an opportunity to study again.

In the first class I found that the lesson was very hard. I saw that the others were very good in speaking English. But I never gave up. During my class I heard my friend talk about Australian Catholic University (A.C.U) Online Program for Burmese migrant people. I passed the A.C.U. entrance exam. Now I strongly believe that my dream no longer can be a dream it will be real one day. I'm now studying at University through **Marist Mission Ranong**.

Next MMC Newsletter will focus on Marist Mission Ranong/Marist Asia Foundation - a major MMC Partner .

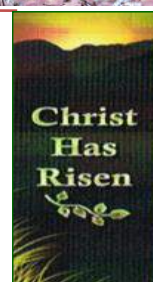


A wonderful windfall inside a 40 foot shipping container - echoes of WW2 !

Mr Greg Bartels, chairman of the Chatswood Community Nursing Home, on its recent closure, made available many beds, wheel chairs and walkers for the Philippines. Needy folk now manage more easily in the Alexian Dialysis Unit for indigent patients, kids with cancers at the House of Hope and frail elderly Sisters who have spent life-times serving the poor. It echoes blessings Greg brought to the liberation of the Philippines in World War II as a young naval officer in Leyte. Thanks Greg for a wonderful blessing shared to those with special need.

Our Beloved Dead

In November, Catholics remember in prayer deceased family and friends. The enclosed envelopes are for names of deceased loved ones and if you so wish, for a Mass stipend to support our Marist Missionaries. Thanks.



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Pls. Post: Marist Missions, Locked Bag 5002, Gladesville, NSW 1675

Or Fax to (02) 9816 1737 or donate on line at



CHILDREN AT RISK

- More than 110 million primary school age children worldwide are not enrolled in school.
- 11 million children die each year from preventable diseases causes: bad water and inadequate health care.
- The majority are girls or disabled. Many are refugees.
- An estimated 250 million children, aged 5 to 14 around the world are forced to work.



With compassion and caring we create Hope.



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