

Reflections

Our actions in review

Issue #626 Summer 2021

Your generosity is
enriching lives and inspiring hope.



Jesuit
Mission



India

COVID-19 response:

Dear Friends,

Last year, during what was an incredibly challenging time, I was truly humbled by the generosity shown by you, our wonderful Jesuit Mission community, to our work overseas. I was especially moved by the resilience of our global family to overcome the hardships brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I want to sincerely thank you for all that you've done and I feel assured to know that together we will do our best to support our overseas partners and communities as the pandemic continues to bring new challenges.

I wish to farewell and thank my partner in mission – Fr Trung Nguyen SJ, Jesuit Mission's Rector. The Provincial has appointed Fr Trung as Parish Priest of Richmond in Melbourne. We will all greatly miss his gentle presence, his humour and all the gifts he has brought to Jesuit Mission over the past five years.

Finally, I welcome Isaac Demase SJ and Fr Paul Horan SJ who join us as 'Companions' to Jesuit Mission.

Stay well, and I hope to see you – virtually or perhaps even in person – in the New Year.

With thanks,

Helen Forde
Chief Executive Officer



With your help, our partners are providing life-saving employment and emergency relief to vulnerable communities.

With millions of cases recorded, COVID-19 continues to devastate India. In an effort to contain the virus, there have been widespread lockdowns, which have left millions unemployed. Without jobs, people are leaving the large cities to return to their home villages. However, many rural communities have little or no employment available, and countless families are facing extreme poverty.

It's in these very challenging situations that we have an even greater opportunity to serve. Lenity Australia has been generously funding the work of Hazaribag-based Jesuits and reaching out to the most vulnerable communities affected by COVID-19. Life-saving support has been delivered to 3,174 households in Jharkhand State, India – including 19,000 Dalit and Tribal women, men and children.



ABOVE: Cash for work programs such as building wells brought employment and purpose to indigenous and Dalit people as the pandemic continues.

Your profound impact

To date:

- 17,566 people have received emergency food relief packages
- 1,315 people were employed through 'Cash for Work' programs
- 15 people participated in an income generating scheme that enabled them to open small businesses
- New wells were installed and repairs to village schools, toilets, kitchens and essential utilities were carried out across the state.

This compassion in action is not just helping vulnerable people to survive the pandemic, but upholding their dignity and creating new opportunities for their future.

"It would have been very difficult for me to exist if the situation like this continued," says Hazaribag Dalit, Mr Turi, who worked on school repairs and maintenance in the Lenity Australia funded Coronavirus Relief Project.

"These kind-hearted people have made my existence possible. I am grateful to the donors who brought life and happiness on us who are very poor," says another participant Mr Kumar.



ABOVE: Jesuits distribute emergency food packages and supplies to people in Hazaribag.

Farewell and thank you

As the outgoing Rector of Jesuit Mission, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your support of Jesuit Mission.

It has been a blessed five years, where I have encountered and befriended so many generous people who share the same ideal of justice and love for the poor. I have loved the opportunity to visit my Jesuit brothers and serve the people that they accompany. It has been a joy to see faith, hope, and love in action, and the multitude of lives enriched.

I am deeply grateful to Helen Forde and the Jesuit Mission team for their outstanding work, and especially for all of Jesuit Mission's friends and supporters. It is only through your generosity that we are able to do what we do.

The time has come for me to hand the baton to my Jesuit brothers – Isaac Demase SJ and Fr Paul Horan SJ – who will serve as Companions to Jesuit Mission in 2021. This year I began my new role as Parish Priest of St Ignatius' Church, Richmond and I humbly ask for your prayers.

With gratitude and blessings,

Fr Trung Nguyen SJ
Rector of Jesuit Mission



ABOVE: Fr Trung Nguyen SJ (left), Helen Forde and Fr Paul Horan SJ.

Myanmar

Educating the next generation

An inspiring graduate is helping to give vulnerable young people the education they deserve.



ABOVE: Inspiring young SAG graduate, Mary Lu, is bringing education and hope for a brighter future to vulnerable students in IDP camps.

In 2019, Mary Lu graduated from St Aloysius Gonzaga Institute (SAG) in Taunggyi, Myanmar with her Diploma in Education and Social Work. Now, Mary Lu is working with our local partner, Jesuit Refugee Service Asia-Pacific (JRS), using her education to help transform the lives of displaced refugees in her home region of Kachin State.

"My time at SAG helped me to understand my purpose in life," says Mary Lu. "I learnt about the importance of service, which led me to work with people in need."

Due to decades of neglect, there is a vital need for education in Myanmar. With the generous support of people like you, SAG has been working to fill this gap.

For twenty years the Institute has been providing young people from the poorest backgrounds with the training they need to become teachers, social workers and compassionate leaders. With these skills, graduates can go out into their home regions as teachers to improve access to education, rebuild communities and bring opportunity to the entire country of Myanmar.

Mary Lu is delighted to be working with JRS, helping to empower vulnerable communities through education. Currently, JRS is focused on providing quality education for children living in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in conflict-affected remote areas of Kachin State, her home region.

For Mary Lu, this is challenging work, but she is grateful to be able to use the transformational education that she received at SAG to help her community. She works each day with children in Banmaw IDP camp, promoting education and providing essential supplies and invaluable hope.

"I love my job with Jesuit Refugee Service," says Mary Lu. "My fieldwork focuses on providing teaching and learning materials for children who live in IDP camps, accompanying volunteer teachers in remote areas and training teachers."

Thailand

A new beginning

Love, care and companionship gave prisoner Jadao a second chance at life.

For the men and women incarcerated in Thailand's prisons, life is extremely difficult. Many have no visitors and struggle with terrible loneliness, fear, depression and hopelessness.

This was certainly the case for Jadao, who received a life sentence in 2010. However, everything started to change when he began receiving visits from the Prison Services Program, run by our local partner, Jesuit Foundation Thailand.

Thanks to the compassionate support of people like you, the Prison Services Program accompanies over 1,200 prisoners in eight prisons across Thailand, providing companionship and much-needed care, love, and pastoral support. For Jadao, these visits were transformational. "How come you, who I never knew, come to visit me in prison?" he would say. "There must be a God!"

When Jadao's sentence was reduced, and he was released from prison in August 2019, the Prison Services Program team was there to accompany him on his journey to begin his new life. Jadao returned to his home village with a heart full of love, gratitude and determination. He started out living with his parents, as his own home had fallen into disrepair.

Jadao soon became the primary income earner in the family, but longed to repair his own home and gain more independence.



Jadao visiting the Jesuit Foundation Thailand office and sharing his home-grown lychees to show thanks.

With the help of Jesuit Mission supporters, the Prison Services Program team was able to help Jadao with materials to repair his house. Now with firm walls and no more leaks, Jadao can begin

his next chapter. "Now I can live here and start my new life, not so far from my parents and I can still take care of my father who is paralysed," he says.



With your support, Jadao now has a weather-proof home and a brighter future.



Cambodia

Raising up the forgotten

Your support is helping to open up a new world for people living with a disability.

"Before joining the program he could not feed himself. Now, after three years, he can eat with a spoon," says Rattana's mother with joy.

Rattana is six years old and lives with a growth disorder that has inhibited his physical and intellectual development. Before connecting with our local Jesuit partner, Karuna Battambang Organisation (KBO), life was very challenging for the family.

In Cambodia, many people believe that having a child with a disability is the consequence of wrongs committed by the family's ancestors, and it is unlucky to be in their company.

As a result, people living with a disability often face discrimination and exclusion.

Rattana's family had to cope with this discrimination, while also carrying the burden of poverty and the high level of care required by Rattana. But thanks to the kind support of our wonderful Jesuit Mission community, KBO's 'Enhancing the Life of People with Disabilities' program has been able to bring new help and hope to the family.

The program provides practical support and interventions to give people living with disabilities the skills, medical care and help they need to live fuller, freer lives.

Rattana is one of the 276 people living with a disability, who KBO is working with today. His mother diligently follows the advice of the program's staff and is delighted to see Rattana's continuous development. Along with feeding himself, he is now able to walk with the support of a rail installed in the family home – and he recently voiced a new aspiration.

"Rattana wants to go to school now," says his delighted mother. "When he sees children in their school uniform, he points and says 'I like.'"

ABOVE: No longer excluded, six-year-old Rattana now has the opportunity for a brighter future.

Celebrating 100!

Join us in wishing life-long Jesuit Mission supporter Pat Prendergast a very happy birthday.



ABOVE: Lifelong Jesuit Mission supporter Pat (right) with Jesuit Mission Philanthropy Coordinator Julie Sanders.

Pat Prendergast has had a lifelong connection with the Jesuits. Both she and her brother Gavin were baptised and confirmed at St Ignatius' Catholic Church in Norwood, South Australia.

Gavin went on to become Fr Gavin O'Sullivan SJ, one of the earliest young Australian Jesuits who accepted the call to serve vulnerable communities in Hazaribag, India, in 1952.

Pat couldn't have been prouder of her brother, and visited him in Hazaribag several times. "I was privileged to occasionally do the Readings at Mass in the little Hazaribag chapel," Pat recalls. "When we visited for Gavin's Golden Jubilee we went to see the Taj Mahal... I remember cooking sausages and mash at a Jesuit house on the way. It was a joyful experience for us all!"

The same year her brother left for India, Pat began supporting Jesuit Mission. While raising her eight children, she regularly attended the Maytime Fair in Melbourne and has shown exceptional commitment to supporting our sisters and brothers living in the global margins.

We'd like to express our most sincere thanks to Pat and wish her every blessing on her 100th birthday. Congratulations Pat!

Thank You

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our lives here in Australia, we offer our most heartfelt gratitude to everyone in our community for the generosity and compassion you have shown to our vulnerable sisters and brothers overseas.

A special thanks to the six Jesuit schools who participated in Jesuit Mission's 2020 "Walking in Solidarity" fundraiser. Over 1,400 students and staff walked, ran, rode – and for those in Melbourne's lockdown – cooked, to stand in solidarity with people living in poverty across Asia and Southern Africa. An incredible \$100,000 was raised for Jesuit Mission to support works overseas.

Our thanks also to John XXIII College who hosted a wonderful 'Virtual Musical Soiree'; and Loyola College, Watsonia who in the midst of a very challenging year, took the time to host several fundraising events. The funds raised by both schools will contribute to much-needed Jesuit Mission COVID-19 relief programs.



ABOVE: Students of St Aloysius' College walk in solidarity.



LEFT: Through your support, emergency food packages have been delivered to children in Ulmera, Timor-Leste.

Prayer for Critical Courage

Let us join together in the prayer for Critical Courage, written by Fr Michael Hansen SJ, National Director of the First Spiritual Exercises Program.

Like our vulnerable brothers and sisters living with a disability in

Cambodia, who demonstrate enormous levels of courage to overcome the impossible, we too pray for courage to meet the many challenges that confront us and look for God to find a way.

'Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord (Psalm 27)!'

Prayer time: Twenty minutes.

- Take five minutes each for the four steps.
- Pause at the three dots...
- If you are especially moved at any of the steps, remain there for the rest of the prayer.



1. Immersion

I hold an object that symbolises the gift of courage for me.

2. Desire

Where is spiritual courage present in my life? ...
Where is spiritual courage absent in my life? ...
What is the opposite of spiritual courage for me? ...

I ask the Spirit of Courage to give me the gift of courage, especially when I begin to lose heart in the face of huge lifestyle changes, loss of certainty and critical health care.

3. Choice

I choose to follow the way of courage, led by the good spirit, toward God's love... I reject the way of fear and timidity, of being harassed by a bad spirit...

I turn and walk in the contrary direction, from fear, to courage, to peace...

4. Courage

I imagine the Spirit addresses me, saying, 'Be strong, take courage, I am with you.'

So I rest, for a while, and reflect on the whole day, in the Spirit's encouragement. I feel braver...



Front cover picture

Thanks to Jesuit Mission supporters, people living with a disability in Cambodia can develop life skills to live fuller and freer lives.

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