

Reflections

Our actions in review

Issue #630 Summer 2023



Jesuit
Mission

Your generosity is
enriching lives and inspiring hope.

From our CEO



Dear Friends,

Happy 2023! I hope that you celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ with family and friends and it was a joy-filled experience.

I am delighted to share our latest Reflections with you. In this edition, we share how your generosity and friendship with Jesuit Mission is touching the lives of people living in Timor-Leste, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia and India.

Read how clean water is enabling Timorese communities to experience better hygiene and improved food security. Discover how Cambodian students are learning to care for the environment through an ecological learning program. See how higher education is creating employment opportunities for indigenous young adults in northern Thailand and learn how dozens of tuition centres in India are providing young Dalit children with essential education post pandemic. Plus, learn how refugees living in Indonesia

survived COVID-19 through emergency support and accompaniment.

All the life-changing stories that we share in Reflections are only made possible through you.

Your solidarity and unwavering financial assistance ensure that our Jesuit partners are always standing with communities in need. Please accept my heartfelt thanks for the trust that you place in Jesuit Mission and our partners overseas. Together, we are making a difference.

In closing, I ask you to remember in your prayers the people of Ukraine, Myanmar and so many other countries where conflict, war and injustice is rife. We pray for peace, reconciliation, and safety of all people.

Many blessings on your year ahead.

Helen Forde
Chief Executive Officer

Achieving economic freedom

Thanks to your generosity, the Poverty Alleviation Project in Myanmar provides microcredit loans to people like May, to help them start their own businesses and become self-sufficient.

Run by our partner the Myanmar Jesuit Region, the project enables people living in the slums to empower themselves to break out of the cycle of poverty.

Given the current economic crisis and violence that has enveloped Myanmar, these microcredit loans are ensuring that vulnerable people can find opportunity in dark times.



For 31 year old May and her husband, the loan helped them to invest in her small shop.

“My husband and I work from 7:00am – 5:00pm everyday. With the money provided we are now able to find and sell more food and live more comfortably. Thank you,” she said.

In 2022, over 300 people were supported through micro-credit loans, many of whom opened up their own businesses including bicycle repair shops, clothes shops, selling fruit and vegetables, make-shift restaurants, providing transport and more.



Water the gift of life

For Jonia, a 28 year old mother, village chief, part-time coffee worker and graduate of the Jesuit-run secondary school NOSSEF, the installation of a water facility on her doorstep in Railaco has dramatically improved her community.

Thanks to the collaboration of many village leaders and your generous support, our four-year partnership with Jesuit Social Service (JSS) Timor-Leste has brought clean water to more than 15 rural villages, transforming the lives of over 5,000 people.

“It is all totally different now. Our house is very close to the water tank, just a few metres away. We can use it any time we like,” said Jonia.

Previously, Jonia’s community would walk over one kilometre to the nearest clean water source in the river, a trip that had to be made multiple times in the day by different members of the family.

“Since it was far to collect water, we only used that water for cooking. We had to wash our clothes and bathe in the river because it would be very difficult for us, especially the children,” said Jonia.

With clean water now nearby, Jonia’s community is experiencing new agricultural opportunities and an improved standard of hygiene.

Children no longer have the burden of collecting water before and after school.

“Water helps our children grow. We want them to be teachers, doctors, and engineers. We want them to have a good life,” she said.

As a village chief and a mother, Jonia is ensuring that the next generation has access to all their basic needs and opportunity.

Since the beginning of the water project in her village, Jonia was responsible for organising meetings between her community and the JSS team. As a result, the people in her village were very cooperative and saw the significant change fresh water in the village could bring.

Her community was happy to financially contribute to the facility, as well as provide the labour to build the water tank.



Above and Top: Jonia (left) collecting water from the new water tank with her family.



Caring for our common home

Thanks to your support, the Ecology Program in Cambodia focuses on forest conservation efforts to enhance capacities of local communities, including students, in ecological restoration, advocacy and sustainability.

Since 2013, 29 year old Chanda has been working in the Ecology Program for Jesuit Service Cambodia (JSC). In 2021 she began teaching and empowering primary and secondary school students to become caretakers of their environment.

“The Ecology Project supports students through environmental awareness education as well as provides seedlings for each student to plant and grow their own trees,” said Chanda.

Young students, teachers and families from the rural Kambal District of Phnom Penh and Prey Thom community of Battambang Province, are encouraged to get involved with activities such as managing plant nurseries and the production of seedlings.

Funding from Jesuit Mission and you, our generous supporters, provides the ongoing supply of seedlings to local schools along with tools and training to support a thriving ecology system.

Chanda has run ecology classes in over 10 different schools to promote sustainability and also teach the students about the dangers of plastic pollution and climate change.

Switching from an accounting background to receiving a scholarship from the Jesuits to study a Master’s of Tropical Risk Management at Ateneo De Manila University in the Philippines, Chanda is passionate to educate the next generation of Cambodia.

“In Cambodia we have significant environmental emergencies, including disasters like flooding, droughts and storms. I hope my knowledge can help our society in Cambodia in the future.” she said.

Currently ecology is not part of the Cambodian school system curriculum, making JSC’s Ecology Program even more vital in educating the youth and building a sustainable future.

In addition, the program also empowers many people with disabilities to take care of the seedlings at their nursery, meaning that the whole community develops the responsibility to take care of their common home.



After Chanda’s presentation, 500 students from Angkop Pey Primary School planted trees.



Empowering stateless youth

In rural Chiang Rai, Thailand, Xavier Learning Community (XLC) has been uplifting the next generation of indigenous youth through the power of education.

The Jesuit-run tertiary education institution is transforming the lives of 114 students from vulnerable indigenous groups including Akha, H’mong, Karen, Lanna and more.

For 21 year old scholarship student Chaichana, education is the pathway for him and his family out of poverty and injustice.

Being part of the Karen ethnic minority in Thailand, Chaichana and his family are considered stateless and are subject to discrimination.

Unfortunately, for many indigenous children, there is no other option but to give up their studies to work and support their families in farming or other labour-intensive jobs.

Yet thanks to your compassionate support, Chaichana has been thriving at XLC since 2019.

“It is a great opportunity for me to be studying at XLC. Without this scholarship program, I would have worked outside to help my brother pursue his higher education and I would have missed out,” he said.

Thanks to Chaichana’s scholarship, his parents can focus on supporting his siblings’ education.

Since his parents migrated from Myanmar to Thailand 25 years ago, they have both been working as cleaners at a local school.



Chaichana (left) planting rice with his peers at XLC.

Although their income is limited, they are working their hardest to ensure that their two children receive the best opportunities available to them. To support his parents, during high school Chaichana would also assist them with cleaning the schools and bathrooms. As a result, during his high school years, he didn’t have much time to study.

Thanks to your generosity, now Chaichana can study and achieve his dream to apply for Thai citizenship after he graduates, which will be easier to acquire once he obtains a Bachelor’s degree.

He is hopeful that with his studies he will secure a reliable job so that he may support his family and his brother’s studies.

“With my improved English, IT competence, and the life skills I attain at XLC, I feel I have a hope-filled future,” said Chaichana.



Accompanying refugees during the pandemic

For 13 years, Zainuddin has been giving refugees hope through his work with our partner Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Indonesia. Zainuddin works on the Journey with De Facto Refugees Program, which provides support where it's needed most for refugees living independently in Bogor and Jakarta.

As the Case Management Team Coordinator in Bogor, Zainuddin's responsibilities extended to handling JRS' COVID-19 response across the city during the pandemic.

"In the pandemic, refugees became even more vulnerable. If they got COVID-19 they weren't guaranteed access to health services, they also starved if they had to be isolated," said Zainuddin.

For those refugees in COVID-19 isolation, Zainuddin was distributing emergency food packages and checking in on their recovery.

In addition to emergency pandemic support, the program provides vital psychosocial services, financial support for food and rent, livelihood assistance and access to health services, all of which has become increasingly inaccessible for refugees during the pandemic.

"As someone who had COVID-19, I was lucky because I had family and friends who supported me. I am also a citizen who has access to health services. But many of the refugees we support do not have these things," said Zainuddin.



Zainuddin visits a refugee recovering from COVID-19 and provides emergency food.

Thanks to your generosity, in the last six months JRS Indonesia supported over 1,200 refugees in need.

"Wherever they are from, refugees are a group of people who have lost part of their lives. They just need to be protected, to keep their hope and dignity in order to be able to survive and thrive in their future," he said.



Thank you for walking with One Foot Raised

Thank you to all Jesuit Mission supporters, parishes, school staff and students who followed in the footsteps of St Ignatius the Pilgrim and walked with One Foot Raised last year.

Jesuit Mission is deeply grateful for the amazing effort of everyone involved. Together you raised over \$100,000 for marginalised communities overseas.

"Thank you to our wonderful supporters, you truly went above and beyond in walking in solidarity with our sisters and brothers around the world. Let us continue to walk with One Foot Raised and empower vulnerable communities to bring themselves out of the cycle of poverty and injustice," said Helen Forde, CEO of Jesuit Mission.

One Foot Raised is Jesuit Mission's new supporter event, where participants are challenged to walk and raise funds for Jesuit Mission using a peer-to-peer online platform.

We walk because St Ignatius walked, we walk because Jesuit Missionaries walk alongside the marginalised and we walk because many children in Jesuit Mission supported schools overseas walk long distances each day to gain a quality education.

For St Ignatius, the ideal leader lives with "one foot raised," moving always into new lands and new cultures, ready to step forward and respond to human need and suffering in the world.

By participating in One Foot Raised, you can provide hope and opportunity to communities in desperate need, who walk great distances to access education, water and healthcare. We hope you'll consider walking with us this year - to find out more visit onefootraised.org.au



Above: To mark the end of the Ignatian Year, Fr Sacha Bermudez- Goldman SJ and Danusia Kaska led a group of 15 young adults to walk with One Foot Raised on the annual 'Ignatian Camino'.
Top: Students from Saint Ignatius' College Riverview walk with One Foot Raised.



Uplifting

through education

Thanks to the compassionate gifts left by Jesuit Mission supporters in their Will, change is afoot in the rural villages of Hazaribag in India.

These legacy gifts are supporting the Ankur Project, which is empowering Dalit people – previously known as the ‘untouchables’ – by opening up new ways to overcome stigma, access education and gain opportunity.

The Ankur Project provides tuition centres for Dalit children and began in response to school closures during the COVID-19 lockdown. The project enables a local tutor in each village to provide tuition to village children, giving them the opportunity to continue their education and find a future path out of poverty.

The Hazaribag Jesuits aim to renew the interest of Dalit parents in education and encourage students who have dropped out to return to school. The project is essential in also providing job opportunities to tutors, who are hired from each local village as they understand the context of their own community best.

Now teacher Ramashish runs an Ankur tuition centre, teaching 25 children.

With an honours degree in history, and being the only graduate in his village, Ramashish completed his studies remotely as there are no universities close to his home.

His father is a farmer, who only studied up to Year 9, yet he always encouraged Ramashish and his four other siblings to pursue an education.

Ramashish's education has earned him a lot of respect amongst the local villagers and through this he has been able to encourage parents to value their children's education.

He joined the Ankur Project to help the children of his community to study and get a proper education so that they can improve their family's situation in years to come.

A gift in your Will to Jesuit Mission can help us create real, transformational change for our sisters and brothers overseas, giving them the hope and future opportunities they deserve.

If you are considering leaving a gift in your Will to Jesuit Mission please get in touch with Susan Vaz for a confidential discussion on 02 8918 4109 or email susan.vaz@jesuitmission.org.au

Upcoming Events

- **Melbourne Golf Day** – Friday 24 February
- **Maytime Fair** – Saturday 6 May
- **Jesuit Mission Bazaar** – Saturday 9 September



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The Ecology Program in Cambodia is empowering students to become caretakers of their environment.