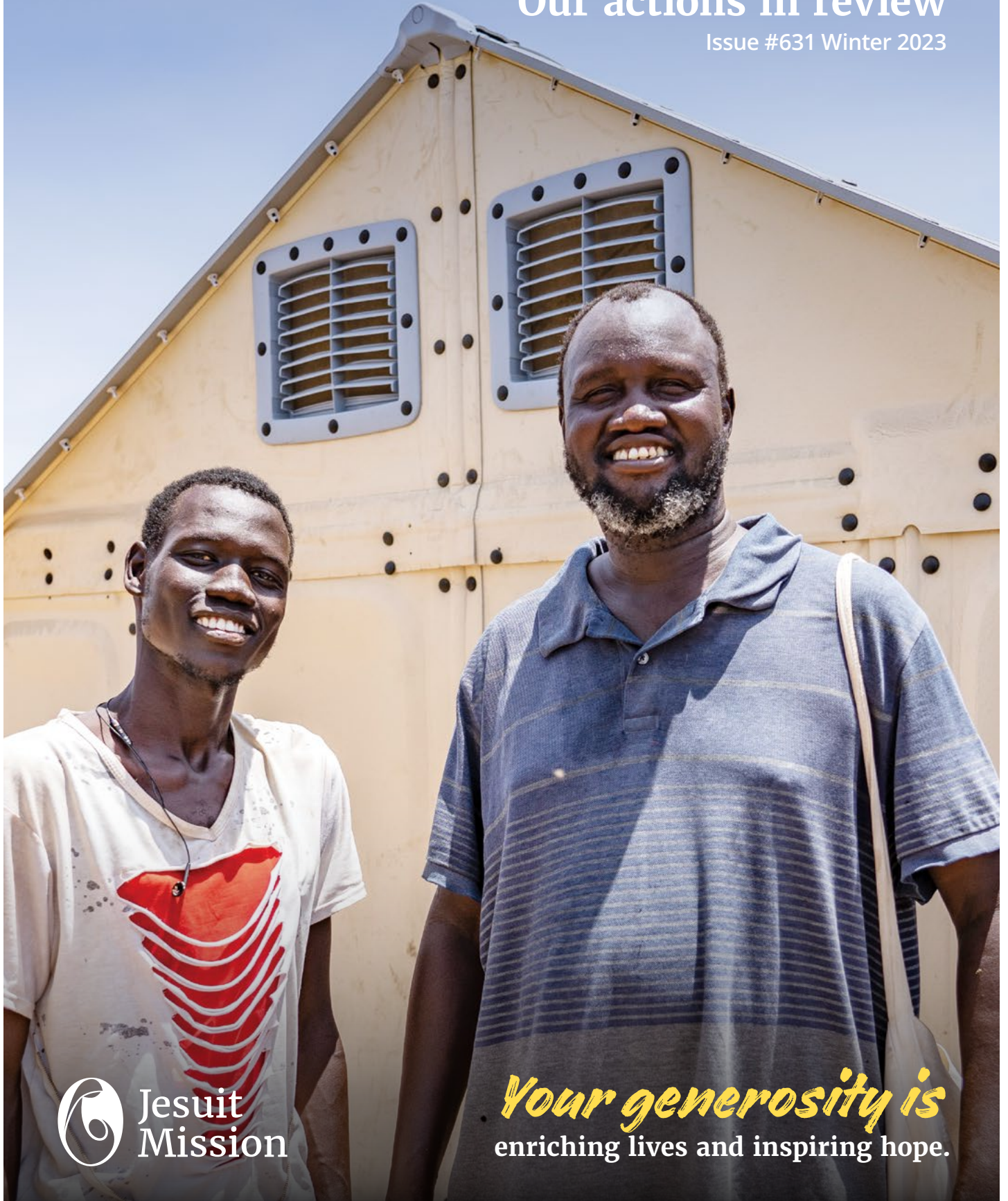


Reflections

Our actions in review

Issue #631 Winter 2023



Jesuit
Mission

Your generosity is
enriching lives and inspiring hope.

From the CEO



Dear Friends,

I'm in frequent contact with our Jesuit partners around the world and continue to be in awe of the incredible impact of your generosity. Together, as one Jesuit Mission family, we are standing in solidarity with

our sisters and brothers in need, helping to uplift them in the face of crisis, injustice and poverty.

When earthquakes struck the war-torn country of Syria, and conflict escalated the humanitarian crisis in Sudan, your compassionate support enabled our Jesuit partners on the ground to respond swiftly and effectively. With you by their side, they were among the first responders and able to provide the most affected communities with life-sustaining support including emergency shelter, food relief, medicine, and psychosocial support.

In this edition of Reflections, I invite you to read more about how your kindness is helping to bring new hope and opportunity to vulnerable people in countries including India, Cambodia and Timor-Leste. You can also learn more about the ways our Emergency Action Fund, fuelled by the generosity of people like you, is helping our local partners create lasting change for people whose lives have been shattered by the ongoing conflicts in Myanmar and Ukraine.

Please join me in praying for peace and safety for our sisters and brothers in these regions of conflict, and the wellbeing of all in our global family.

With thanks,

Helen Forde
Chief Executive Officer

Praying for a peaceful and long life

"I never expected to end up in a place like this – in this situation," says Nura, a grandmother who fled Sudan to find safety for her family in Renk, South Sudan.

Triggered by the war that started in Sudan in April, a serious humanitarian crisis is now unfolding in the region.

To date, around one million people – predominantly children and women – have been internally displaced by the conflict, while over 300,000 people like Nura have fled to neighbouring countries.

Your compassionate support has helped our local partners Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in South Sudan and Chad prioritise the most vulnerable refugees.

JRS South Sudan is providing emergency support including shelter, food, water and psychosocial support to help families like Nura's overcome unimaginable trauma.

With her two-year-old granddaughter safely in her arms, Nura prays each day for peace. ***"I wish for my children to be educated and have a peaceful and long life,"*** she says.



Nura with her granddaughter.



Jitni (standing right) speaking with her community.

Rewriting the narrative of oppression

Traditionally known as the 'untouchable' caste, Dalit people have suffered systemic exclusion and discrimination that's pushed them into the margins of Indian society.

But thanks to the compassionate gifts left by Jesuit Mission supporters in their Wills, Dalit people like Jitni are developing the skills they need to drive change and bring new opportunity to the rural villages of Bihar, India.

Our local partner, the Jesuit Research and Development Society, initiated 'Lok Manch', the People's Movement. The Lok Manch program works in coastal communities to empower Dalit leaders to understand their rights, identify their community's needs and engage with governments to ensure those needs are met.

For Jitni and her community, the program has been life-changing.

A 50-year-old mother of two, Jitni has long rebelled against discrimination. However, it wasn't until she enrolled in the Lok Manch program that she was able to build her skills as a Dalit leader and develop strategies to bring equality and resilience to her community.

Leading with enthusiasm and skill, Jitni is now a Ward Member in the local government, fearlessly rewriting the narrative of oppression for her people. She's working to ensure her community

receives just access to entitlements including free housing, water connections, ration cards, pension programs and other government schemes.

"Before we met the staff of Lok Manch, we had a lot of problems," she says. "We didn't know about our socio-economic entitlements and human rights. But through regular group meetings and capacity-building programs run by the project, we learned about human rights and dignity, and the ability to stand against the odds."

Redressing institutionalised injustice will take time, but thanks to the generosity of gifts in Wills left by our Jesuit Mission family, change is underway.

For a confidential discussion on Gifts in Wills, you can contact Susan Vaz on 02 8918 4109 or susan.vaz@jesuitmission.org.au



Jitni (left) with her daughter-in-law and grandson.



Khadiya, Abed and their family sitting in the only inhabitable room left in their damaged house.

In solidarity with earthquake survivors

When two catastrophic earthquakes struck Syria and Turkey on 6 February 2023, over 50,000 people were killed and countless homes and buildings were destroyed.

At the time of the first earthquake, Abed, his wife Khadiya and five of their six children were at home in their small house in Aleppo, one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Syria. *“We were all very scared. I was really confused, and I didn’t know what to do,”* says Abed.

Their house – that had already been damaged in the war that’s been raging in Syria since 2011 – collapsed and trapped the family for several hours before they were able to escape.

Thanks to the generosity of kind donations to our Syria Earthquake Response Appeal, we helped enable our local partner Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Syria to be amongst the first on the ground to provide immediate help to earthquake survivors.

In vulnerable communities like Aleppo, around 15,500 survivors, including Abed’s family, received food, winter kits and psychosocial support. *“We received some food that really helped us, but what I value the most is the way they [JRS Syria] approached us and cared for us, we received – and still receive – the emotional support we need,”* says Abed.

Several months after the earthquakes, your support continues to ensure Syrian people are not forgotten. Your compassion in action is helping JRS Syria provide structured, long-term support including ongoing food relief, shelter, education for children and accompaniment to aid recovery.

Abed, Khadiya and their family have moved back into their home and are slowly repairing the widespread damage. Still coming to terms with the disaster, Khadiya receives support from the JRS psychosocial support team, including personal sessions for survivors.

“Thanks to the sessions, I’ve learnt how to respond and manage stress during and after these kinds of events, and I now feel stronger and more confident, but it’s not easy, it’s a long process,” says Khadiya.



Khadiya with her daughter.



Empowering Cambodian Youth through education

In a country where the vast majority of the population live in rural areas and endure the constant burden of poverty, your generosity is helping young people create better futures for themselves and their families.

With your support the transformative Battambang Education Project, run by our local partner Apostolic Prefecture of Battambang, seeks out and prioritises the most vulnerable students in Northwest Cambodia. These students are then supported with education scholarships, accommodation and the holistic care they need to fulfil their potential.

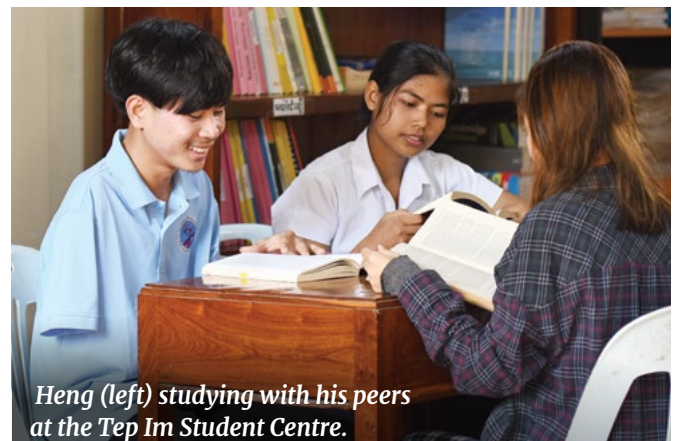
For Heng, the future looked challenging before the Battambang Education Project.

The third of four children, Heng was involved in a traffic accident that caused him to lose his right hand when he was just three years old. Like many children growing up in poor farming families, Heng was likely to receive only a rudimentary education before leaving school to help his family earn a livelihood.

But in 2018 Heng was identified as a candidate for the Battambang Education Project and received a scholarship that enabled him to finish high school.

Passing his Grade 12 National Exams with flying colours, Heng then moved into one of the six hostels run by the Battambang Education Project. Designed for students from remote villages, each hostel provides students like Heng with a safe, nurturing environment where they can continue their education and thrive under a supervised student formation program. ***“At the Tep Im Student Centre I feel at home,”*** says Heng.

Now 20, Heng is rejoicing as a second-year university student, majoring in Rural Community Development. ***“I know that by studying hard, I can help myself, my family and Cambodian society,”*** he says. ***“Being able to study has given me and my family hope for a better future.”***





Bendita with her family.

Nourishing a better future

“I am grateful for the nutrition program as it helps our family so much,” says Bendita a mother living in the village of Lebododon, in Railaco, Timor-Leste.

Railaco has one of the highest infant mortality rates in Timor-Leste. But thanks to the support of kind people like you, the Jesuits in Timor-Leste are bringing life-saving food and nutrition education to vulnerable families.

Thanks to the phenomenal support from Sydney-based Jesuit Parish St Canice’s, since 2004, the Nutrition Program has offered invaluable support to families like Bendita’s who live in remote villages in the region. Predominantly subsistence farmers, they simply can’t afford regular, nutritious meals for their children.

Through the Nutrition Program, children receive balanced weekly meals that include chicken, tofu, tempeh, vegetables and rice. While simple, these nutritious meals are often beyond the means of a family like Bendita’s. ***“If my children were not a part of this program they would only eat cassava and corn,”*** she says.

Last year, with you by their side, our Jesuit partner supported 330 children in Railaco. By providing essential meals the program is helping children thrive, and preventing the serious consequences of malnourishment including

illness and stunted development. ***“All of my children have been a part of this program,”*** says Bendita. ***“They are healthier because of receiving nutritious food.”***

The program also educates parents on the importance of diet to ensure the healthy development of their children, and helps children build their cognitive, emotional and physical skills through engaging stories and dance performances.

Now that they have a strong start to life, Bendita can see a better future for her children.

“My hope for my children is that they can all study at a higher level and can have greater opportunities than I had,” she says.



Bendita with her son.

Equipping students to rebuild Myanmar

For over 20 years, St Aloysius Gonzaga (SAG) Institute in Myanmar has been providing young people like Joseph from vulnerable backgrounds with tertiary education.

Now in one of Myanmar's darkest moments, SAG continues to empower future leaders and produce graduates with internationally-recognised qualifications.

Your generosity is helping to support 1,304 current SAG students, providing vital scholarships, accommodation, teacher salaries and amenities.



Joseph, a third-year student, has always wanted to be a teacher. With the skills he is learning at SAG he hopes to return to his home region to improve the standard of education there.

“Recently my father passed away. I promised I would make him proud. I promised to take care of our family and our community,” says Joseph.

He is grateful to receive the education that will help him rebuild Myanmar. ***“I really want to say thank you for your support. I give not only my word but the action that I will build myself up as a good person and teacher.”***



Students at SAG get practical experience. Here Joseph (right) is teaching an English song to his students.

Support amid conflict



Through your generous contributions to our Emergency Action Fund, you've helped JRS Romania support over 15,000 refugees who've fled Ukraine – including 31-year-old Viktoria.

A dance teacher back home, Viktoria was living and working in Irpin when the war broke out. Far from family, she

was terrified. ***“Irpin was devastated by bombs,”*** she says. ***“I went into shock.”***

Viktoria managed to flee Ukraine and three days later she eventually arrived in Romania. There, thanks to you, JRS provided her with emergency accommodation, medical care, food and psychosocial support. ***“JRS is doing so much for the Ukrainians,”*** she says.

After regaining her strength, Viktoria began working with JRS as an interpreter, assisting other refugees. As the first Ukrainian refugee hired by JRS, she also now runs stretch, yoga and meditation classes to improve the well-being of other refugees.

“Stretching classes stabilise and harmonise your body. You focus on your body and it heals you. I think sports and dance are a form of psychological support,” she says.



Win a \$5,000 shopping spree

By purchasing tickets in our annual raffle, you'll be helping our vulnerable brothers and sisters overseas who are living in the margins. Enter for your chance to win:

- **1st prize: \$5,000** Coles Myer gift cards
- **2nd prize: \$2,500** Coles Myer gift cards
- **3rd prize: \$1,000** Coles Myer gift cards

Tickets are available online at:
jesuitmission.org.au/raffle
or call us on **02 8918 4109**.



Entry open to residents of NSW, VIC and NT only. Raffle closes 14 September 2023 and winners drawn 19 September 2023.



Birthday blessings

We've been delighted to learn that kind people in our community are having Jesuit Mission birthday fundraisers, where friends and family donate to Jesuit Mission instead of buying traditional gifts.

As he approached a landmark birthday recently, David from Queensland generously asked for donations to our Timor Water Project.

"My friends and family were relieved that they didn't have to buy a present for an 80-year-old guy," he jokes. "But really, it was a wonderful way to celebrate events and help others who are in desperate need of help."

Pablo from Sydney wholeheartedly agrees. On his 70th birthday he kindly chose to raise funds to support our girls' and women's education projects in Cambodia. *"I think a birthday fundraiser is a great idea," he says. "My birthday celebration was an opportunity to educate some of my friends and family about the work of Jesuit Mission – even though this was not the primary purpose of the celebration!"*

If you'd like information on hosting a fundraiser for your special occasion, email us on support@jesuitmission.org.au



The joy of having clean water in Tocoluli village, Timor-Leste.

Upcoming Events

- **Jesuit Mission Bazaar**
Saturday 9 September, Saint Ignatius' College Riverview



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Mario (right) an arts teacher in Sudan, before fleeing the violence there with Joseph, (left) his former student. Now they are both refugees receiving emergency assistance in Renk, South Sudan.