

Reflections

Our actions in review

Issue #632 Summer 2024



Jesuit
Mission

Your generosity is
enriching lives and inspiring hope.

From our CEO



Dear Friends,

I hope 2024 is off to a great start for you, your family and friends.

As always, I'm delighted to share our latest edition of Reflections with you.

I hope you'll enjoy learning more about the ways your generosity and compassion are creating tangible change for our vulnerable sisters and brothers living overseas.

In this edition you'll find a wide range of stories that show the incredible impact of your support. Read about how you're providing welcome, protection and vital accompaniment for refugees fleeing the conflict in Ukraine; empowering women in India to generate income

independently; and, delivering education and new hope to young people living in the isolated refugee camps on the Myanmar/Thai border.

These transformational stories we share in Reflections are only made possible with your solidarity and unwavering support. With you, our Jesuit partners are always able to stand with communities in need.

Please accept my heartfelt thanks for all that you do.

With blessings for the year ahead,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Helen Forde".

Helen Forde

Chief Executive Officer

Witnessing our impact

I've visited many different countries for work and leisure over the years, however my time in Cambodia was indeed quite different. It was wonderful to see the work that Jesuit Mission is supporting on the ground and I have a range of emotions when reflecting on everything I saw.



Helen Forde and Pat Davies at Light of Mercy Home in Cambodia, a supportive home and centre which provides life-changing education for children living with a disability, like Makara (middle).

From sadness and frustration, I experienced great optimism and happiness in witnessing the impact from the efforts of many great people in Cambodia as well as the staff of Jesuit Mission here in Australia.

For many people living in rural Cambodia, it is a constant struggle to provide food and shelter for their families. Yet, they are incredibly resilient and have such gratitude for our partnership.

We are fortunate to have access to a vast array of educational institutions in Australia and we should do what we can to help expand the access to education for the vulnerable, be it school, vocational or tertiary.

The wider the access to education, the brighter the prospects for people uplifting themselves and transforming their futures.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Pat Davies".

Pat Davies

Jesuit Mission Board Member and supporter



Daniela (left) and Ivana (right) at the JRS Romania centre.

Fleeing to new hope

Your vital contributions to Jesuit Mission's Emergency Action Fund have helped our local partner Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Romania to accompany over 16,000 people who fled the war in Ukraine, including Ivana and her 15-year-old daughter Daniela.

"The people here in Romania are very friendly. They always smile and say hello. We feel very welcome and my daughter has already made many friends here," said Ivana.

Before the conflict, Ivana, a chef and Daniela, a gymnast, lived peacefully near an airfield in Odessa, southern Ukraine. Then, with little warning, their world was shattered. Odessa became a target of air strikes and they had to escape before it was too late.

They first travelled to Bulgaria, then Moldova. But without support, they couldn't establish a stable home and continued their difficult journey.

Thanks to your generosity, when they arrived in Romania everything changed. JRS Romania were there on the ground helping Ukrainian refugees secure apartments, recommence with education and rebuild community connections. When Ivana and Daniela arrived in the country, the JRS team helped them get settled into their own apartment and provided a network of support and healing.

Now, the mother and daughter are building their new lives and see their future in their new home. Daniela has her sights set on completing school in Romania so she can enrol in a local university. *"I want to stay and study here,"* she says. *"I want to have a normal life."*

Thanks to our Australian Jesuit Mission community, through JRS Europe and Xavier Network, thousands of Ukrainian refugees like Ivana and Daniela are receiving holistic assistance, protection and psychological support.

From conflict to the classroom

Thanks to your support, our partner Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Thailand is bringing education to 3,000 children in isolated refugee camps along the Myanmar and Thailand border.

For refugees, living conditions in the Ban Mai Nai Soi and Ban Mae Surin camps are extremely tough. Recovering from the trauma of being displaced by the ongoing conflicts in Myanmar, families are faced with very limited access to education and minimal job prospects. Refugees are also restricted from movement outside the camps, making it nearly impossible to make a livelihood.

But with people like you by their side, JRS Thailand has supported over 11,000 refugees in these border camps over the last six months. Together, we are providing vulnerable children like Denpo with the vital education they need to prepare them for a brighter future.

Fourteen-year-old Denpo has always been a good student. Born in Myanmar, he excelled in his studies and especially loved studying Burmese. But his education came to an abrupt halt when his family was forced to flee Myanmar to escape the conflict.

Since arriving at the border camps in March 2023, Denpo's family has been receiving social support from JRS Thailand, and Denpo has been enrolled in school, studying subjects including English, Burmese, mathematics, science and history.



Denpo in the camp classroom.

Happy to once again have the opportunity to learn, Denpo is thriving – even in the difficult circumstances. ***“I have made many friends and I love studying,”*** Denpo says. ***“In the future I want to be a school principal.”***

Your compassionate support is also helping JRS Thailand to bring opportunities to out-of-school children and young people at risk, as well as providing teacher training programs to empower local teachers and an Inclusive Education program to reach children living with disabilities.



Denpo (left) in the school staff room with his uncle.



Pedrosa in the university library.

Seizing the opportunity to learn

When independence was achieved in Timor-Leste in 2002, the people of the country faced many new challenges, including rebuilding critical institutions such as schools.

Thanks to supporters like you, our local Jesuit partners were able to walk with our Timorese sisters and brothers to help establish the secondary school Colégio de Santo Inácio de Loiola (CSIL).

Now home to 830 students across years 7 to 12, students are encouraged to study well and take up extra-curricular activities including music, sport, dance and the arts. They are supported to succeed with counselling and educated with the spirit of Ignatian teaching. The President of Timor-Leste recognised the excellence of the standard of education at the school by awarding CSIL with the 'Medal of Merit of the Order of Timor-Leste' in 2023.

CSIL opens up pathways to opportunities that might have otherwise been out of reach, especially for students who come from vulnerable families in rural areas, like Pedrosa.

With the support of kind people like you, Pedrosa received a scholarship to CSIL. A brilliant and highly motivated student, she finished her high school studies and immediately began pursuing her tertiary studies.

Pedrosa is incredibly grateful to be one of 39 CSIL graduates who is now supported with a scholarship to study at university. Made possible by a Jesuit Mission supporter like you, Pedrosa is one step closer to achieving her dream of holding a Bachelor's degree in her hands.

"I did my best at CSIL and now I am doing the best I can to seize this opportunity to complete my Bachelor's degree in Biology," she says. "The support is a tremendous help for my studies because I can attend all the classes, buy school materials and eat at the school canteen."

Thanks to your generosity, more young women from vulnerable rural communities, like Pedrosa, have life-changing opportunities that only education can bring.



Pedrosa in the classroom with her peers.



Rathnavva (right) with her husband Nagappa (left) standing in front of their brick collection.



Each brick is made by hand. Here a worker adds the completed brick to the collection, where it will later be sold.

Bricks of empowerment

After joining a self-help group run by our local partner, the Karnataka Jesuits, Rathnavva has started a thriving brickmaking business and hopes to uplift other members of her community.

Thanks to the compassionate bequests left by Jesuit Mission supporters in their Wills, the Karnataka Jesuits have supported over 1,300 Indigenous tribal people in the last year, with innovative programs including locally run self-help groups.

These self-help groups empower women and men with a wide range of skills and income generating activities like animal husbandry, basket making and brickmaking.

For Rathnavva (43), learning brickmaking has been life changing. Before learning this new skill, the mother of three would have to leave her family behind to seek work on distant farms.

Now that Rathnavva's established her own brickmaking business, she's able to support her family with her income, and her husband and children can also work alongside her.

"The work is a little bit harder, but it is much more rewarding," she says. "It's better because I prefer to run my own business rather than work on other people's agriculture. We are able to earn more for ourselves and we enjoy staying together and working together."

Rathnavva is using the skills she learned at her local self-help group, not only for making the bricks themselves, but also for financial planning and budgeting.

These days, she's making around 10,000 bricks per month. This brings Rathnavva great joy, but she has bigger dreams that include helping other women from the self-help group find employment.

"I want to build the business so that I can invite my companions in the group to work for me," Rathnavva says. "I want to uplift the community as a whole."

Thanks to the generosity of Gifts in Wills, Rathnavva can dream for her community. For a confidential discussion on leaving your own legacy, you can contact Susan Vaz on 02 8918 4109 or susan.vaz@jesuitmission.org.au

Our wonderful 'Stampies' creating lasting change

Jesuit Mission Australia is blessed to have such an inspiring family of supporters and volunteers, including John who first came into contact with our very special 'Stampies' group over 20 years ago.

"My initial contact with the Jesuit Mission Stampies was as a customer," John recalls. "I began volunteering, then around 15 years ago I was asked to take over as the stamp unit manager by the Provincial office staff."

Led by Angelo and John, our 'Stampies' raise vital funds by inviting people in our community to donate stamps. Stamp collections are then auctioned or sold to collectors at various events throughout the year, including the Maytime Fair.

We're deeply grateful for the dedication of our 'Stampies' who raise thousands each year, creating real, lasting change for marginalised members of our global family overseas.

"On occasions when Jesuit priests visit Australia [from overseas] they always express great appreciation for the work we do," says John. "Importantly, they emphasise that every \$1 we raise here does \$10 worth of good overseas."

If you're interested in donating stamps or volunteering on the 'Stampies' team, please contact our office on (02) 8918 4109.



20,000 people receive clean water



Nam can now bring fresh water to his family.

In Vietnam, your generosity is helping to provide safe drinking water to more than 20,000 people a year across villages in the Central Provinces of Vietnam.

"Residents are so happy to use the hygienic water," says Fr Peter Truong Van Phuc SJ who oversaw the installation of a UV-sterilised water station that supplies safe water to 200 families on Tam Hai, a remote island in Quang Nam province.

Until now, contamination of surface water by agricultural activities and pollution across the coastal region has meant vulnerable local fishing families have had to choose between buying expensive bottled water or risking severe illness from unsafe tap water.

But clean water is on the way thanks to people like you. Ten UV-sterilised water stations, like the one on Tam Hai island, have now been completed across the Central Provinces by our local partner, Jesuit Province in Vietnam. Access to safe water is already improving the health of children and families in villages around the region.



Your support is giving hope and joy to students at the Campion Institute.

Inspiring confidence

"Thanks to the scholarship program, I had the chance to join Campion Institute and my life has changed significantly," says Isabella. *"My English has improved greatly, along with my communication skills."*

With your kind support, thousands of children and young people in Myanmar, like Isabella, are transforming their lives by learning English at the Campion Institute.

The school, which is run by our local partner, Myanmar Jesuit Region, is educating over 1,000 students this year.

For these young people, a scholarship can mean the difference between attending school and missing out.

With English language skills being an important part of securing professional employment, these scholarships are transforming lives and opening new worlds of opportunities for young people to create brighter futures.

For Isabella, starting English lessons at the Campion Institute has been a true gift. She always longed to learn English so she could achieve her dream of running a global business, but her father's illness meant her family wasn't able to afford her tuition.

But with people like you by her side, Isabella has received a scholarship that's allowed her to harness her passion to learn English, advancing from beginner to advanced level in just six semesters. She has also been able to practice public speaking and participate in extracurricular activities, like sports days and art competitions.

Once nervous about speaking in public, her education at Campion has helped Isabella develop new confidence. *"Presentations have been especially beneficial in improving my speaking skills and confidence,"* she says. *"Initially, I was afraid of speaking in front of people, but now I feel much more confident."*

With your support, Isabella has developed skills that will enable her to pursue her goal of running a global accounting business that can support her entire family.

Upcoming Events

• **Melbourne Golf Day**
Friday 16 February

• **Maytime Fair**
Saturday 4 May

• **Jesuit Mission Bazaar**
Saturday 14 September



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Nagappa and Rathnavva's thriving brick making business is empowering their family and local community.