

Reflections

Our actions in review

Issue #633 Winter 2024



Jesuit
Mission

Your generosity is
enriching lives and inspiring hope

From our CEO



Dear Friends,

I'm delighted to share the latest edition of 'Reflections' with you.

As work with our Jesuit partners continues around the world, I'm filled with gratitude for your unwavering support and the joy that you've brought to our brothers and sisters in need over the last six months.

Please enjoy the following stories that show how your compassionate generosity is giving hope to Syrians and Ukrainians surviving crisis; uplifting people living with disabilities in Cambodia; helping vulnerable families nourish themselves in Timor-Leste; ensuring education is available to the most disadvantaged children in Myanmar... and more.

As turmoil grips many parts of the world, I ask you to please keep our Jesuit partners and the people they serve in your thoughts and prayers.

With love and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Forde".

Helen Forde
Chief Executive Officer

Illuminating learning

The education system in Myanmar is broken and most students require extra tuition classes outside of school hours.

Families living in the crowded slums of Yangon can barely afford daily food and essentials, let alone send their children for basic or additional education classes. Their homes are small and often poorly constructed, many don't have electricity or sufficient lighting to allow students to complete homework and study in the evenings.

To support these children to complete their education and lift themselves out of poverty, our local partner runs a number of well-lit evening study and tuition centres.

Staffed primarily by volunteer teachers like Ko Kyaw, who have their own life-challenges, the study centres are giving hope and a chance to some of Myanmar's poorest and most excluded children to improve their futures.

***"Here we have 40 students, whose parents are day-labourers and many cannot pay for tuition. The students are eager to learn and I pray for a brighter future ahead for themselves and their families,"** says Ko Kyaw.*



Ko Kyaw standing in the background.



Children are provided with books, stationery and a well-lit study centre.



Sinoun studies at school in addition to lessons at home with KBO teachers.

From struggle to strength



Sinoun outside at her home.

Through the Karuna Battambang Organisation (KBO) in Cambodia, your support is helping people with disabilities to live more full, independent lives in the community.

Living with an intellectual disability in Cambodia can be very difficult, especially in rural

areas where lack of awareness results in serious discrimination and exclusion. But for families like Sinoun's, your support is helping KBO break down barriers and provide vital access to healthcare, education, and livelihood skills training.

As a young girl, Sinoun* had trouble speaking clearly, walking without help and managing everyday tasks. With her parents busy working on their farm to make enough money to feed the family, Sinoun's grandmother became her devoted caregiver.

KBO first met Sinoun when she was five years old. After assessing her physical and intellectual disabilities, the team began providing her with tailored health treatments and learning support. KBO specialists also started physical therapy with Sinoun and taught her grandmother how to continue the exercises that would help the young girl develop her independence.

Thanks to the generosity of Jesuit Mission supporters like you, KBO was also able to provide practical support for the family including rice to relieve food shortage, better access to clean water, a toilet for improved hygiene and chickens for an additional source of income.

Now 12 years old, Sinoun is attending school, and her teacher reports she is growing in confidence every day. ***"My favourite subject is English. I want to become an English teacher,"*** says Sinoun.

Keeping pace with her developing skills, Sinoun's family continues to receive guidance on how to best support her at home and they share this knowledge with others in their community. Your generosity has changed Sinoun's life, and last year alone helped 500 other Cambodian people living with an intellectual disability and autism, and over 2,500 of their family members and community leaders.



The Food Security Project increases knowledge and understanding of agricultural techniques, as well as practical hands-on training.

Harvesting knowledge and nutrition to grow

Together, we're helping educate families on the importance of nutrition through sustainable agriculture projects in rural Timor-Leste, where food shortages cause hunger, malnutrition and one of the world's worst childhood stunting rates.

The Food Security Project, run by our partner Jesuit Social Service Timor-Leste provides communities with tools and skills training to grow food sustainably, along with education on the role and importance of nutrition in preventing illness. Rural farmers are empowered with practical knowledge including how to prepare land for farming, how to create wet and dry organic fertilisers and how to conserve water resources.

For people like 36-year-old Lorenzo, these sustainable farming skills are not only helping him grow enough food to reliably feed his family, but he can now generate an income by producing a surplus to harvest and sell at the local market.

A husband and father of four, Lorenzo has always farmed his land, but until now he lacked the skills to maximise his yields. *"I have been farming for a long time, but I have relied on very basic techniques,"* he says. *"So, I only farmed enough for us to consume and did not know how to improve the produce to generate an income."*

"The agricultural training component of this program has been life-changing for me and my family...I've learnt to make a fishpond by using tarpaulin and to make mobile chicken huts that can be movable from the fields next to houses."

Last year, Jesuit Mission supporters, like you, helped over 725 people in rural Timor-Leste to learn new agricultural skills and grow more nutritious food.



Lorenzo is proud of his new organic fertiliser skills.



Baby Zain born 1 month after the earthquake is one of the youngest to benefit from our emergency response.

Nurturing new life

When the earthquake struck Syria on 6 February last year, the miracle of new life was growing amidst the devastation. Heavily pregnant, 24-year-old Khawla* managed to safely escape her apartment building with her two children just before it completely collapsed. Khawla's husband lost his life in the earthquake, and she lost all hope.

When Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Syria's outreach team visited Khawla, they found the family in dire need – crammed in a shelter with four other families and no food. With her due date fast approaching, Khawla showed clear signs of malnutrition and she was struggling to cope with her unfathomable situation.

Thanks to the compassion of Jesuit Mission supporters, JRS Syria was able to provide immediate help, including food and access to urgent medical care. Khawla was quickly admitted to hospital and just three days later, little baby Zain arrived weighing just over 1kg.

Fragile but resilient, Zain began to grow and gain strength, today he is healthy. His mother says: ***"I am thankful for all the support we received ... we felt there was always someone beside us, listening to us and caring for us".***

With your help, in the year following the earthquake, JRS Syria was able to provide 44,000 people, like Khawla and Zain, with emergency assistance in their time of greatest need, delivering food, warm clothing, medicine and helping people cope with trauma and loss.

For the people of Syria, the earthquake was just one crisis of the many tragedies they've survived over the last 13 years. This year, with help from our Jesuit Mission community, JRS Syria continues to support 900 severely affected families in Aleppo who are still in acute need of food aid, shelter and psychosocial support. With your help, Syrian people like Zain and Khawla have new life.

A lifeline for Ukraine's displaced

Two and a half years have passed since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine. In the face of displacement and despair, the generosity of people like you has enabled our partners, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Europe and JRS Poland, to extend a lifeline to people caught in the midst of this humanitarian crisis.

Over 6 million people have been displaced, approximately 1.8 million of whom navigate the perilous journey back and forth into Ukraine, exposing themselves to great risk as they attempt to reconnect with lives shattered by the war.

Galina and her family were forced to flee their home in the Bucha region after waking on a winter's morning to the sound of nearby explosions. *"From that moment, our life was like a horrible dream,"* she says.

The family tried to remain at home, but with no electricity, no mobile reception, and food becoming increasingly scarce, they were forced to leave. *"I will never get rid of the feeling of fear that I have only a few pieces of bread left,"* says Galina. *"We had to save our own lives. I believe that it was God's will that we managed to flee."*

Upon crossing the border into Poland, Galina and her family found themselves strangers in a foreign land. Thankfully, kind volunteers ushered



After having to leave everything behind, Galina (pictured with her husband) says JRS became their second home.

them to the city of Poznan and offered shelter until they made contact with JRS Poland.

"JRS became our second home, not only physically, but also spiritually," Galina says.

While the future is still uncertain, Galina and her family are now safe.

"My family is very grateful to God for His kindness and to the wonderful JRS staff," she says.

Your generosity has supported over 100,000 Ukrainian refugees like Galina. Together we pray for an end to the conflict and peace for all our brothers and sisters.



Women and children account for more than 90% of Ukrainian refugees in Poland.



Nagubai standing outside her current home, which will soon be replaced with a new house.

Building a legacy of dignity

Thanks to the compassionate bequests left by Jesuit Mission supporters in their Wills, the Sustainable Development Project in west India is helping local tribal communities gain self-reliance through livelihood training, education on land rights and support to access housing programs.

Run by the North Karnataka Jesuits, the project is giving Indigenous women like Nagubai, the opportunity to build a safe home and gain new control over the future.

For Nagubai, life hasn't been easy. For 30 years she's lived in a small shelter in her village. She and her husband both worked as day labourers to support their family of six until an injury forced Nagubai out of work. Their home – a badly worn mud hut – became unlivable when they could no longer afford the constant repairs it required.

With thanks to our kind supporters, our partner was able to help Nagubai access assistance to build a new home. For Nagubai, this wasn't just

a matter of bricks and mortar. Building a new home represents security, dignity, and hope for her family's future.

Completing this house will be a dream realised. *“The house will be in my name, not even in my husband's name!”* she exclaims. *“I want my children to study well and get good jobs and not struggle like us.”*

With you by their side, last year the North Karnataka Jesuits supported over 1,300 Indigenous people across 35 villages in Karnataka Province, providing life-changing resources and training to help families and communities flourish.

Each member of our global family has the right to a safe and dignified home. We are deeply grateful to every person who has made the compassionate decision to leave of a gift in their Will to Jesuit Mission. These generous gifts will create meaningful change for families like Nagubai's into the future.



Win a \$5,000 shopping spree

Purchase tickets in our annual raffle, and 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
20 September
2024 and
winners drawn
23 September
2024.



 Raffle Ticket



Xavier College Parents' Association Lolly Stall.

Community and sustainability at the heart of another great Maytime Fair

This year's Maytime Fair was a wonderful success thanks to the Melbourne community. This year we surpassed our fundraising target, whilst also reinforcing the importance of sustainability and caring for our common home.

"The Fair featured a Sustainability stall, which required no electricity, with stationary bikes powering smoothie blenders and eskys, promoting eco-friendly practices. We also had recycling points for cans, reused signage, and responsibly collected and recycled left over books," said Katrina Varis, Jesuit Mission's Event Coordinator.

It was a joy-filled day of community with over 5,000 supporters at Xavier College, who have generously hosted the Fair for over 70 years.

"The legacy of the Maytime Fair traces back over 70 years when the first Australian Jesuits went to India, witnessing to the gospel of Christ and empowering marginalised communities in cities and tribal villages through pastoral support and education. Today, nearly 200 Indian Jesuits continue this mission in the Hazaribag Province, supported by the few remaining elderly Australian Jesuits," said Fr Chris Middleton SJ, Rector of Xavier College.



Upcoming Events

Jesuit Mission Bazaar

Saturday 14 September, St Ignatius' College Riverview



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Sinoun* with a KBO teacher providing lessons in her home. See her story on page 3.

*Names of some people have been changed to protect their privacy.