

Reflections

Our actions in review

Issue #635 Winter 2025



Jesuit
Mission

Your generosity is
enriching lives and inspiring hope

From our CEO



Dear Friends,

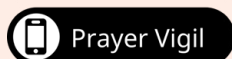
Amid the winter's chill, it's my pleasure to share the latest edition of 'Reflections' with you.

Today and every day, I am deeply grateful for the work you make possible around the world. Please enjoy the following stories that show how your support is empowering our partners overseas to provide vital relief in the aftermath of the earthquake in Myanmar, to bring life-changing opportunities to vulnerable girls in India, and to give new hope to forgotten refugees in Thailand – and more.

As we pray for those living in emergency crises around the world, I would like to thank our global Jesuit family and everyone who joined our Prayer Vigil for Myanmar on 29 May. Held in collaboration with the Taizé community, it was a moving display of solidarity, lighting hope in the darkness in Myanmar.

With love and gratitude,

Helen Forde
Chief Executive Officer



A Jesuit missionary and visionary: Pope Francis (1936–2025)

With deep sadness we joined the global Church community in mourning the passing of Pope Francis — now at peace and, we pray, rejoicing in heaven.

A tireless voice for climate justice and the dignity of refugees and migrants, Pope Francis reminded us that care for our common home and for the most vulnerable is central to the Gospel message. He spoke with profound compassion for those living in poverty, the marginalised, and those cast aside by systems of injustice, always urging us to walk in solidarity with them.

“We accompany Pope Francis with our hearts and prayers in his definitive encounter with the God of unconditional love and infinite mercy, whose face Pope Francis showed us with his life and teaching”

Jesuit Father General Arturo Sosa SJ said.

During his papacy, Pope Francis stood as an advocate for peace, denouncing violence and consistently drawing the world's attention to the human cost of war.

“His humility, courage and compassion inspired so many. Rest in peace Pope Francis,”
said Helen Forde, CEO of Jesuit Mission Australia.



In 2024, after a 13 hour flight to Indonesia, Pope Francis met refugees and vulnerable families supported by our project partner JRS Indonesia. Image Copyright: Vatican Media.



Anupa and Rani.

Challenging tradition and inspiring change

In rural India, your support is turning silence into strength.

Many marginalised communities have long experienced exclusion and discrimination, with limited access to basic rights, resources and education. But a new hope is dawning.

Supported by people like you, our partner, Jesuit Research and Development Society, is working with vulnerable groups to break the cycle of disadvantage. The 'Lok Manch' project has trained over 6,000 people to become Community Leaders, equipping them to identify local needs and engage with government to improve access to essential schemes and entitlements.

A vital part of the project is the Women's Empowerment Groups, which helps marginalised women and girls—like 18-year-olds Rani and Anupa—learn about their rights and entitlements.

"When the Women's Group came to our village to talk about women's rights, I liked what I heard," says Rani.

"Until then, I didn't know about the Group, but I didn't like the discrimination in my family," adds Anupa.

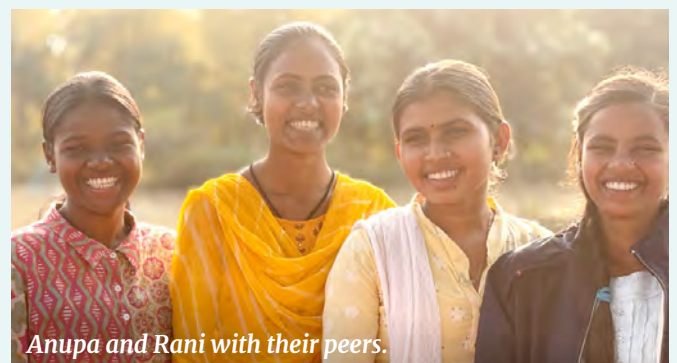
Since joining, Rani and Anupa have transformed from quiet, shy girls into confident young

women with new skills, confidence, and a better understanding of their rights.

Despite initial resistance from the community, the girls built their own football field, convinced their parents to support them, entered a tournament—and won first place.

With your support, Rani has attended leadership training in Ranchi and Delhi and, with a new sense of independence, aspires to play on the national women's football team. ***"I also want to tell my parents not to impose an arranged marriage on me,"*** she says. ***"I can decide for myself."***

Anupa, who plans to study economics and law, encourages others to stand up for their rights. *"I want my younger sister to be able to dream on her own."* When a girl in their village faced early marriage, the group stepped in, spoke with her parents—and stopped it from going ahead.



Anupa and Rani with their peers.



One of the buildings in central Myanmar that was destroyed by the earthquake.

Rebuilding a foundation of solidarity

Amid the devastation of the earthquake in Myanmar, your compassion is assisting our local Jesuit partners to bring hope and vital aid to affected communities.

The 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck Myanmar on 28 March, displacing over two million people and leaving them vulnerable to hunger, disease, and violence.

Within 24 hours of the earthquake, our partners responded by working closely with local people and Church networks to assess the situation and identify unmet needs in affected communities. They've provided essential ongoing aid including food, clean water, shelter, hygiene, medical equipment and psychosocial support.

"In some areas the heat was over 40 degrees Celsius, but people didn't stop distributing aid, removing the debris and looking out for one another," said our partner on the ground.

In the aftermath, the team is now looking to the next urgent priority for affected communities: housing. "In the long term, the plan is to support the construction of low-cost, disaster-resilient houses, designed with guidance from engineers, particularly for families with no or low income."

Sadly, the earthquake worsens Myanmar's already fragile situation, where conflict, displacement, and economic collapse have shattered the country's

peace over the last four years. But despite all they've endured, the spirit of the people of Myanmar remains strong. "During the emergency response, what stayed with me most was the profound hospitality and spirit of solidarity."

Thanks to the generosity and kindness of people like you, our brothers and sisters will continue to accompany those suffering through the devastation and help them rebuild their lives and communities.

"When our values align, it becomes easier to collaborate toward a common action: providing relief and support to those affected by the earthquake during this difficult time. In the end, it is humanity that binds us together."



Some locals were using just their hands and simple tools to clear away debris in search of missing people.



Bunchy takes great pride in being the gardener at Light of Mercy Home.

Shining the Light of Mercy

Since 1997, Light of Mercy Home in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, has been transforming the lives of children who may otherwise have been forgotten.

Run by our partner, Jesuit Service Cambodia, this home for children living with disability opens the door to independence for some of Cambodia's most marginalised people.

Bunchy, now 30, was abandoned as a baby due to his disability and his family's extreme poverty. After being found in a rubbish bin, Bunchy was delivered to the Light of Mercy Home, where he was loved back to life by the Sisters, staff and other children.

Extreme malnourishment and a lack of understanding of his disability in his early years, meant Bunchy didn't talk until he was 12, and remained in year 1 until he was 18. However, supported by people like you, Bunchy grew up loved and cherished by those around him. And, with the help of his teachers and classmates, he worked hard to earn a vocational certificate.

Today, he lives independently in Siem Reap and is employed as a gardener by Sister Denise Coghlan, a Mercy sister from Brisbane, who stays at the Siem Reap Jesuit Reflection Centre. She reports he's a good gardener who always brings love and joy to those he encounters on his life's journey.

"My job provided my livelihood and transformed me into a person with inner strength," says Bunchy. "I am more tolerant now and my life is peaceful."

To young people experiencing hardship, he shares: "Even with challenges, you can move forward. Read books that nurture your strength. Share what you have."

Every year, our Jesuit Mission family helps the Light of Mercy Home support around 20 students living with disabilities, like Bunchy. Encouraged to realise their full potential, students learn practical life skills—including cooking, money management, and computer skills—and all are assisted to attend local educational institutions. In 2024, staff and students alike celebrated when every student passed the annual examinations.





Thein washing his pigs in the camp.

Community for Forgotten Refugees

“The military burnt down all the houses in my village. The people moved back into the village and built the houses again, and again the military came and burnt it all down. This happened three times,” says Thein, a former teacher and father of eight whose family fled Myanmar in 2009.

Thein and his family are among the 12,000 Karenni refugees who escaped violence in Myanmar and now live in a refugee camp in Mae Hong Son, Thailand.

For these displaced people, the prison-like existence in the Mae Hong Son camps is having a devastating psychological impact – robbing people of their hope and spirit of community.

“We are safe here,” he says. *“But life in the camps is hard. The food ration has reduced, and rice is more expensive every year.”*

With your support there is light in the darkness. Our local partner, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Asia Pacific, is leading the ‘Pastoral Accompaniment of Burmese Refugees’ project in the camps. Designed to restore hope and a sense of community and social inclusion to people living in these desperate circumstances,

the program provides accompaniment, pastoral care, and access to a sacramental life, which is especially important for Catholic refugees.

The project includes community-driven ‘Family Friendship Groups’ that encourage vital connection and provides camp members with psychosocial counselling, advocacy and practical support. Part of this is a pig-raising initiative that helps people learn new skills and make a small income, which is otherwise extremely difficult in the camps.

These days, with your help, Thein works closely with JRS Asia Pacific and is on a mission to rebuild community and connection for Burmese people in the camps. “I help organise the Family Friendship Groups and assist with translation,” he says. “I also welcome new arrivals to the camp and often do home visits to check on the community and to assess needs.”





Students at ISJB say thank you to their supporters around the world.

On a joyful mission in Timor-Leste

Fr Sacha Bermudez-Goldman SJ, a Companion of Jesuit Mission, left Australia in mid-January 2025 to join the Instituto São João de Brito (ISJB) in Kasait, Timor-Leste, as part of their teaching staff and their Ignatian Formation team.

Generously supported by our warm, wonderful Jesuit Mission family here in Australia, ISJB is an inspiring Teacher Training College that offers a four-year Bachelor's degree in Teaching to over 400 students each year.

At ISJB, these young men and women receive the education they need to become the next generation of teachers who will help uplift the quality of education in Timor-Leste and create lasting change into the future.

Excited by the challenge of his new role at ISJB, Fr Sacha first had to learn the nuances of a new language. "Three days after arriving in Timor-Leste, I started four weeks of Tetum language training," says Fr Sacha. "Learning a new language is truly a great lesson in humility and patience!"

Then, to further accelerate his language skills, Sacha moved to the small mountain village of Matataria, a mission site in Railaco parish. "I ended up celebrating seven masses in Tetum there," he recalls.

With his preparation complete, Fr Sacha took up his place at ISJB, teaching English and Mathematics and working with the Formation

team to offer pastoral care, spiritual programs, retreats and guidance to students, teachers, and staff.

"Jesuit and Ignatian values, culture and tradition are already very much embedded in the curriculum and culture of ISJB," he says. "Weekly masses, Ignatian accompaniment, annual retreats and several days of recollection throughout the year, are some of the activities students and staff are offered, but there is so much more that the Formation team would like to offer, and we are working on this together."

Open-hearted and always ready to help, Fr Sacha is deeply thankful for all the messages of support, thoughts and prayers he has received from our Australian Jesuit community.

"I'm grateful to be here and hope to be able to contribute in some small ways to our mission in this beautiful country."



Fr Sacha celebrating the Eucharist with students at ISJB.



The Lok Manch program in India educates women to stand up for their rights and live with dignity.

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

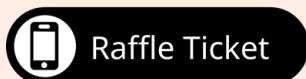
\$5,000 Coles Myer gift cards

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 3pm, 19 September 2025. Prize drawn 22 September 2025 and winners' names will be published on the Jesuit Mission website on 29 September 2025.



Celebrating Generosity and Service

More than 55 years ago, Adrienne Burns' connection with Jesuit Mission Australia began when her late husband, Brendan, attended a talk at St Ignatius Norwood Parish.

There, he heard Fr Lou Lachal SJ, one of the pioneering Australian Jesuits to serve in Hazaribag, India, speak about his mission.

Inspired to raise money to support Jesuit Mission's work, for ten years Adrienne and Brendan organised and hosted elegant Dinner Dance Fundraisers in Adelaide, often with up to 500 people attending.

"I think we were very brave because we didn't know much about doing it!" she laughs, remembering those days in the 70s and 80s.

The couple's selfless giving did not stop there. Adrienne devoted many years to teaching music to refugees, while Brendan, who sadly passed away last September, left a powerful legacy through a gift in his Will to Jesuit Mission—empowering children in Timor-Leste with access to education.

If you are considering leaving a Gift in your Will to Jesuit Mission, please contact our Supporter Relations Manager Susan Vaz at susan.vaz@jesuitmission.org.au

Upcoming Events

Jesuit Mission Bazaar Sydney • 13 September



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Three times his village was burnt down, now Thein helps rebuild lives.