

# Reflections

Our actions in review

Issue #623 Winter 2019

*Your generosity is*  
enriching lives and inspiring hope.



Jesuit  
Mission



## Reflecting on our Mission

Hello dear friends,

Nothing brings me closer to the work you make possible than meeting the participants face to face. In March 2019, I met Daw Khin Nwet, pictured above with her grandson. They live in the crowded and muddy Thingangyun slum in Yangon, Myanmar. Thanks to you, Khin Nwet received a micro-credit loan. Now she owns a sewing machine which has changed her life.

There are so many like her, that benefit directly from your warmth and selflessness.

Read how your generosity is helping flood victims and children with HIV in India. In Myanmar, education is transforming the lives of many who have fled from brutality and terror. Those injured by landmines in Cambodia are given some mobility back.

These people have known despair, but thanks to you, they now know hope.

Please receive in your hearts the gratitude I saw on their faces.

With thanks,

*Helen Forde*

**Helen Forde**  
Chief Executive Officer

# India



Renji's treasured goats were lost in the floodwater, leaving her struggling family without a source of income. But thanks to your support, she has two new goats, pictured above. Deeply grateful, she said *"Now I am confident and want to live, because I got back my livelihood through the Society of Jesus."*

## Casting a lifeline

**Kerala is home to thousands of vulnerable families who lack clean water and decent living conditions. In August 2018, a massive monsoon brought heartbreak, with floods killing over 400 people and thousands more becoming homeless.**

It was only thanks to your help that emergency services could be quickly provided. Our Jesuit partner in Kerala has continued to assist many people to rebuild their lives after this disaster. A new weather alert system has also been developed to warn of future floods.



**1.** Mina Ka's home was reduced to loose bricks and debris. Devastation turned to renewed faith when her home (and 20 others) was totally rebuilt.

**2.** Mina Ka's new home is nearly finished and building repairs are being carried out on a further 128 damaged homes.

## Shining the Light of Love

**Children in India with a diagnosis of HIV or AIDS are often excluded and even abandoned. The Holy Cross Sisters are our partner in Tarwa. They help others understand there is nothing to fear from these innocent children.**

Thanks to your support, 150 students at the Snehadeep (Light of Love) Centre are offered education, healthcare and a place to call home.

Unable to access medical care, or left alone when their family must leave to find work, these are very vulnerable children.

At Snehadeep they are given health checks, regular medicine and good nutrition. Instead of a bleak future battling stigma and hardship, these children find spiritual support, counselling and hope.

*"The children feel like they are part of a family."* says Project Coordinator Sr Britto.

Classes are taught from years 1-8, and the children enjoy a cultural program including dance, art, drama and karate. Vocational skills like sewing, nursing, and teaching are offered, plus pathways to train as electricians or in hotel management.



Sr Britto, Fr Trung Nguyen SJ and Fr Bob Slattery SJ with some residents of the Snehadeep Centre.

# Responding to God's Love



Fr Trung Nguyen SJ, surrounded by love, with his mother, family and friends.

## Fr Trung reflects on his spiritual journey

**When a Jesuit takes final vows, it is about being called to be fully incorporated into the Society of Jesus. It is a point of arrival as it is also a point of departure in one's Jesuit life.**

In April I was called to profess final vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. It is about freedom. The freedom to choose and let God direct my life. For me it is the only way to respond to God's love. For me it has been a blessed vocation, and this was a moment of grace in my life as a Jesuit. It is an opportunity for me to reflect on my journey thus far and recall the many faces of Christ that I have encountered.

I am deeply grateful for my Jesuit brothers, family, and friends, who have sustained me in my vocation through your friendship, support, and prayers. Because of you, my life has become richer and more meaningful.

I thank God for all of you, and pray that you will continue to journey with me, to sustain me and form me into the person that God wants me to be. With gratitude and blessings.

**Fr Trung Nguyen SJ, Rector of Jesuit Mission**

# Myanmar

## Micro-credit is transforming lives

In a country that mines about \$30 billion of jade a year, the painful irony is that the majority of Myanmar's citizens live in poverty. But through our local partner your faith is creating change.

A liberating initiative is bringing joy to the crowded and muddy slums of Thingangyun in Yangon. Your support has provided relief in the form of micro-credit loans up to \$326, repayable at the modest rate of 2-3% (instead of the going rate of 20-30%). Recipients provide a business plan to apply, and typically pay off their loans within a year.



1. Daw Khin Ye (second from left) and her son (right) stand with Jesuit Mission's Siobhan Jordan and Helen Forde behind the tricycle they bought with a micro-credit loan. Using the tricycle as a taxi, they can earn about \$5 a day, and no longer have to pay high fees to rent one. They are so grateful that a loft has also been added to their home, because now all six members of the family have enough room to sleep lying down.



2. After Daw Cho Cho Than's home collapsed, her family had nowhere to sleep. As you can see, she is overjoyed to have been provided a new house (costing about \$500) and a micro-credit loan, allowing her to buy a fridge and sell ice creams. "I am very grateful to the people with a big heart. I am always praying for them," she says.



3. Like 40 other loan recipients who bought a sewing machine this year, Daw Khin Nwet (holding flowers), has seized the opportunity to transform her life. She now sells her crafts to tourists.

**"Every square of my life has improved, health, food, clothing. I am lost for words." she says.**



Ma Ramona teaches at Yangon Loyola Community College in 2018.

## Finding freedom

**Growing up in a world scarred by decades of military dictatorship and civil war is perilous. For those excluded because of their religion or ethnic background, it can be brutal.**

Our cover shows Ma Ramona and her friends at Loyola Community College in Yangon. You may not suspect it to look at them, but many of these vital young women have witnessed conflict and horrific violence.

So we are amazed at the resilience and ambition they showed when tertiary education was offered by the Jesuits at the newly established Yangon Loyola Community College (YLCC).

*"All of us have broken stories. But still we refuse to give up and we are continuing our journey"* said Ramona.

Bitterly disappointed at not finishing her studies before having to flee her home, Ramona flourished under the kindness of her teachers at YLCC. Some of her colleagues who had finished their degrees had been denied certification because

they had no ID papers, like her friend Ma Ruu who said *"If I didn't attend YLCC now, I am nothing"*. Proudly, Ruu and Ramona were to become two of the inaugural graduates of YLCC.

Following her success at the College, Ramona continued her studies at the nearby Inigo English Academy, where she also trained to become a teacher. The Academy supports students to grow in confidence and knowledge through social development, drama, life skills and pastoral care activities which address the whole individual's development, to form confident leaders; men and women for others.

Ramona now teaches students at YLCC, who learn English, computer, accountancy, and life skills. Completing the circle, she is providing paths

to employment and a fuller life for others.

*"On the recollection of so many great favours and blessings, with a high sense of gratitude, I offer my sincere thanks to the Almighty, the Creator and the Preserver. And my heart-felt gratitude to the Jesuits. Thank you very much for having made my parents proud of me."* said Ramona.



Ramona (front right) with her colleagues at Inigo English Academy in 2017.



**1.** Br Noel Oliver SJ chats with nine St Aloysius' students who have just been selected to go on an inaugural Cambodian immersion trip in 2020. **2.** Mrs Vanny, holding rice from her harvest with her son.

# Creating change in Cambodia

## Planting seeds of knowledge

**In his humble, genuine way, Br Noel Oliver SJ worked his magic in Sydney recently. Generously sharing his time with St Aloysius' and St Ignatius' Colleges, he addressed over 250 boys in small groups over two days in May.**

Tailoring his talks to the age of the students, he captivated the boys with his first-hand reports of the project he runs in Cambodia to benefit subsistence rice farmers: the System of Rice Intensification (SRI). With precise hand gestures illustrating how far apart to transplant individual seedlings, he vividly illustrated how his team teaches farmers new skills.

Challenging the junior school boys with mental arithmetic,

he ensured they understood the increased number of kilos SRI delivers at harvest time. Senior boys found topics within geography and agricultural science come alive with examples of farmers like Mrs Vanny, featured in our January newsletter. Improved yields for people like her led to socio-economic benefits they could readily grasp: improved nutrition for children, extra time available to pursue education,

enough money to build watertight homes and hygienic bathroom facilities, savings in outlay for rice seed, and an end to fertiliser and pesticides.

This is because first and foremost, Br Noel speaks of his work as an environmental project. Aware of Pope Francis' encyclical on reconciliation with creation, today's students recognise the importance of sustainable practices and food security to the future of the world. Boys from religious studies classes appreciated that Ignatius talked about finding God in all things, and acknowledged that protecting God's creation is a form of worship.

Presenting a fresh side of missionary life and embodying the link between Ignatian pedagogy and Jesuit work, Br Noel does as Ignatius said: *Go where others will not, go where you can do the greatest good, go to the margins.* It's not just about the rice.



The BEP project supports students like these two primary school children with bikes, food and school books.

## Safety and a start

With half of Cambodia's population under 25, many rural children are needed to work on the family farm. Others must fend for themselves when their parents are forced to seek work far from home.

With your generosity the Battambang Education Project (BEP) accompanies at-risk youth, providing education scholarships, accommodation and holistic support to children and young adults living with poverty.

# Co-Missionaries one and all

Thank you to everyone who replied to our last newsletter and shared with us an insight into why you support Jesuit Mission's work. For so many of us, contributing in this way brings us closer to God and to our global family.

Jesuit Missions are the living demonstration of Christ's teaching here on Earth, "Love your neighbour as yourself". Catholic agencies need to be more visible to the public displaying the Church's work in lifting people out of poverty, responding to humanitarian emergencies and furthering Christ's work in the world. — Peter

Jesuit mission is maybe THE GREATEST WORK in the church — educating so many cultures and people to work for a healthy life. — Cleve

We are truly lucky here in Australia. We always need to remember those who are not as fortunate as ourselves and help where we can. We are all the same in God's eyes and that's all that matters. We need to continue to show love and compassion to all. — Jenny

I know of Jesuit Mission through your newsletter in the post over many years. I enjoy the stories and the works of Jesuit Priests serving the poor, living out the Ministry of Jesus, giving communities a second chance. We here in Australia take too much for granted. We turn on the tap and out comes water. God bless. John

We live in a country with plenty of just about everything. We take for granted a lifestyle that millions of people in other parts of the world cannot even begin to comprehend.

It is so wrong and so unjust that some should have so much while others have so little if anything at all. It is with this in mind that I support the Jesuit Mission because what you have done and achieved for these poor people is an inspiration to all who come in contact with the Mission.

Mr C

If I help out in a small way those people who are very poor through no fault of theirs, then I am very happy about that. May God bless all. Brendan

The Jesuit Mission attracted me as it seemed to follow the way of Christ who reached out to all people in need, especially those in isolated areas with no education, except that provided by the Jesuit Mission.

Joe

I am happy to be supporting their courageous Mission, often in war torn parts of the world, to create opportunities for a brighter future for many, especially children. Sr Eileen

# Save these dates



## Thanksgiving Mass

**Thursday 15th August 2019  
Melbourne**

As a thank you to the wonderful people who have contributed so energetically to the Maytime Fair and Green Acres Golf Day events, we would like to invite you all to a Thanksgiving Mass. Please join us at 6pm for Mass at Xavier College in Kew, followed by refreshments served in the Dalton Room. Let's celebrate how your generosity has created change, bringing solace and hope to many. Please RSVP to [events@jesuitmission.org.au](mailto:events@jesuitmission.org.au)



## Indian Bazaar

**Saturday 14th September 2019  
Riverview, Sydney**

You will not want to miss this annual fete and extravaganza which is a major fundraiser enabling Jesuit Mission to support life-changing projects in over 13 countries. Come for the rides, food and music, buy up on Christmas presents to make your December a breeze. Invite your friends and family to meet you for a plate of oysters and a glass of bubbly. Stay for the shows, wine auction and the Rugby 7's tournament.



## Sydney Golf Day

**Thursday 31st October 2019**

Another happy day of golf followed by a gala dinner is anticipated on the last day of October. Nominate your foursome or we can provide playing companions. Those not so keen on golf are most welcome to join in the drinks, fun, dinner and prizes after the game. More information will be available on our website, or address your enquiries to [golfday@jesuitmission.org.au](mailto:golfday@jesuitmission.org.au)



**Front cover picture:**  
Ma Ramona (second from right) has refused to let trauma define her. Thanks to Jesuit Mission's partner in Myanmar, she is now a valued teacher at Yangon Loyola Community College.

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*Faith creating change*