



Helping youth build a better future



Salesian Missions

NEWS

NOVEMBER 2024

Wishing you and your families a peaceful Christmas and New Year filled with hope and gratitude



The Impact of ongoing conflict in Myanmar

Salesian missionaries in Myanmar are providing housing and nutrition to 350 boys who are boarding in Salesian communities. The boys are mainly from war-afflicted zones where there is very little education and safety. Our partners reported that education and providing for basic needs in Myanmar continues to be a challenge given the ongoing war. More than 3 million people are internally displaced with almost 50% of the population are estimated to be living in poverty. Salesian missionaries are responding to the needs of children, youth and their families who are in crisis.

Ethiopia – Internally Displaced Persons are Returning!

After two years of a devastating civil war in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region, a peace agreement has brought hope for normalization. Despite this progress, many Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) remain unable to return to their homes, which are still occupied or destroyed, leaving infrastructure in shambles. The toll of the conflict is severe, with more than half a million lives lost in just two years, and the population grappling with the trauma of war and the loss of loved ones.

The Salesians are working alongside local communities to restore fundamental rights for those most affected in Tigray, particularly the right to safe housing, food security,

and the rebuilding of income opportunities lost to the conflict. Restoring a sense of normalcy and reestablishing community life are essential steps in the journey toward healing.

Following an extensive assessment and consultation process, the Salesians have outlined a three-fold plan of action:

1. Housing and Hygiene: As families return to heavily damaged homes, it is vital they have access to safe, adequate housing and basic hygiene facilities. This foundation is crucial to protect their health, ensure well-being, and support their reintegration into the community.

2. Food Security and Agriculture: Promoting food security is essential, providing returning families with improved agricultural and livestock farming techniques to ensure success and sustainability. This initiative will help communities rebuild self-sufficiency and resilience.

3. Mental Health, Resilience, and Social Cohesion: To address the deep trauma left by the war, the Salesians are committed to promoting resilience and social cohesion, fostering a culture of peace to help prevent future conflict.

We remain hopeful for the continuation of peace and pray for strength for these communities as they rebuild. Thank you for supporting the Salesians' efforts to restore hope and stability to the people of Tigray.



Dear Friends,

At this time of year, we are reminded of how impactful a collective effort can be. The ongoing support of Australians, despite financial strain, is indeed remarkable and speaks to a shared compassion that resonates through the Don Bosco family. Whilst we have been impacted by the effects of the rising cost of living, we and our many Salesians worldwide remain eternally grateful for your on-going support so that we can continue to:

- provide food, supplies and housing to refugees and displaced people in Lebanon, Ukraine and Africa.
- vocational life changing education throughout our many schools in the Pacific and Asia region.
- support youth and outreach programs to enhance the development of local communities.

It is only with your commitment that we can take the time to listen and collaborate with our Salesian family to ensure programs are truly relevant and impactful.



As a pivotal part of our Don Bosco family may the festive season bring warmth, joy, and renewed strength to continue this mission of compassion and care for those in need. Wishing you and your families a peaceful Christmas filled with hope and gratitude for the year ahead.

Thank you and God Bless.



Tina Newton
Director
Salesian Missions
Australia

Prayer

Lord, God of love, give us the strength daily to be instruments of peace. Make us sensitive to the needs of those affected by conflict.

Sustain those who we assist through the Salesian Missions, to persevere in times of struggle and continue to be flames of hope amongst crisis.

Guide those who inflict conflict to be called to peace and mercy and help them to see the heart of those who struggle under their reign.

As we journey towards a new year, Lord, God of Love, be with us and all those in our care.

Samoa on the International Stage

The Don Bosco Schools in Alafua and Salelologa, Samoa, are clearly making a significant impact by aligning with the global Don Bosco education network's vision. By **focusing on vocational learning**, they're ensuring that students are not only educated but also equipped with skills that directly increase their employability in high-demand trades. This approach bridges education with practical experience, empowering students to step confidently into the workforce and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

We were extremely pleased that students from our Hospitality Program in Alafua, were invited to serve at the recent Samoa 2024, **Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting**. The opportunity to wait at such a prestigious event is a valuable experience, showcasing the student's skills and professionalism on an international stage. Programs like these not only prepare students for the workforce but also provide them with real-world experiences that enhance their confidence and employability. Congratulations to the Principal Mane, Course Co-Ordinator / Teacher Norma, program teachers, students and everyone involved! We thank The O'Brien Foundation Australia and St John Bosco Parish, Engadine for making the Hospitality Facility a reality. We hope to expand the facilities in the future to include a dedicated restaurant area to conduct in house training.

"Buy a Seat on the Bus" Campaign

The Don Bosco Technical Centre in Alafua is currently facing significant challenges in safely transporting students to various activities and the central bus terminal, where they access local buses to return home. Their reliance on a pick-up truck becomes particularly problematic during inclement weather, raising concerns about the safety and well-being of our students.

Principal Mane Su'a is dedicated to creating a safer, more controlled transportation environment for our students. To address this urgent need, he has collaborated with the school's PTA to raise an impressive \$60,000 WST. However, we still need your help to raise the remaining \$100,000 WST (approximately A\$55,000) required to purchase a dedicated school bus.

Further developments, activities and successes in our Samoan schools include:

- **Computer Upgrade:** Through Nora (past Cagliero Project Volunteer), the schools will benefit from access to refurbished laptops through the NAB recycled laptop program. Over the coming years the laptops will supply our two schools with the technology to enhance student learning experiences and assist teachers to further develop class programming. On the rural island of Savaii' the Don Bosco school in Salelologa have embraced the usage of the laptops and projector,

India – Encouraging Youth to Dream

The Salesians of Don Bosco in Bangalore and Mumbai are engaged in numerous development projects, ranging from providing shelter for street children to empowering women and youth in rural communities. These initiatives require significant coordination, effort, and funding to make a real and lasting impact on the lives of those they serve.

One of the primary missions of the Salesians is to protect and rescue vulnerable young people from dangerous environments. They are dedicated to **defending the rights of street children** and creating pathways toward

a brighter, more stable future. In shelters and hostels, rescued children receive counselling services from experienced professionals who work closely with each child to understand their unique needs and challenges. This support is crucial in helping these young people heal from past traumas and build resilience.

Education is at the heart of the Salesians' work. Every child is encouraged to attend school, as education is the surest way out of poverty and a pathway to hope. For those in rural areas, Don Bosco Schools and Learning Centres serve as lifelines, providing educational



opening new learning opportunities for research, collaboration and creativity.

- **Shipping Containers:** Benches from Salesian College, Chadstone were sent to the Don Bosco Youth and Education Centre in Fiji. St. John Bosco High School, Engadine (through Sydney Catholic Schools) sent a container full of donated tools and office/classroom furniture. We thank everyone for their support.
- **Sewing Room Refurbishment:** as part of the review of the current facilities it was recommended that work be performed to improve the insulation and ventilation of the classroom. This is both to provide a more suitable climate for participants especially in the community evening course and to better maintain the equipment which deteriorates due to the humidity. Thank you, St Josephs, Ferntree Gully, for your ongoing commitment and support.



access to youth who otherwise lack the resources to travel to cities. In more remote locations, teachers and tutors organize study sessions in village halls to ensure education reaches even the most isolated communities.

Fr. Francis and Fr. Edwin extend their heartfelt gratitude to all supporters of the Don Bosco missions in India. With your continued generosity, you're making a transformative impact on young lives. They also wish each of you a joyous Christmas season, filled with hope and peace.

Thank you for supporting the dreams of India's youth!

Timor Leste – A visit from Pope Francis - Education Strengthens Communities

Timor Leste is one of our closest neighbours located only 690km from Darwin. With their welcoming hospitality and gracious nature the Timorese people embrace challenges and come together to work as one with a strong focus on family, community and religion.

In the wake of the devastating conflict in 1999 that claimed countless lives, decimated entire communities, and created some of the worst living conditions in the world, the Salesian community have provided programs to guide citizens toward development. Efforts are primarily focused on helping poor youth through education and providing new opportunities for the future.

Pope Francis Visit

With around 90 per cent of the population being Roman Catholic, Pope Francis was welcomed in September with opened arms. Pope Francis praised Timor Leste for its recovery after independence and that *"it has been able to rise again, finding a path of peace and openness to a new phase"*. He went on to say, *"you have kept hope firm even in affliction and thanks to the nature of your people and your faith, you have transformed pain into joy!"*.

Today, Timor Leste is a peaceful and democratic country that is committed to building a friendly society, developing peaceful relations and creating opportunities for its people.

The Don Bosco Educational Centre in **Fuiloro** is celebrating its **75th anniversary** and it remains committed to its large community of 13 parishes and is seen as an educational hub. With more than 75 per cent of the population deriving their livelihood from farming, the **Don Bosco Agricultural College** plays a crucial role in promoting better care of livestock and increasing crop yields. The school's aim is to be more self-sustainable by increasing farm production of corn, animal feed, horticultural production, coconut oil production and improved livestock intake. Donations have been directed to the running costs of the school, namely for student fees, scholarships, transportation costs and maintenance.

The **Salesian Sisters Maria Auxiliadora Medical Clinic** continues to provide essential medical care for the poor in Venilale and 14 surrounding villages. They service more than 5,000 patients each year who were treated for common ailments such as malaria, tuberculosis, asthma and pneumonia. The Clinic's priority is care for mothers and children. A high proportion of the local population live in poverty and experience food shortages, access to our Clinic is an important alternative to a costly hospital visit. Health education programs and reproduction education is conducted in local schools and villages.



Salesian Missionaries in Mongolia

In 2001, the first Salesian Missionaries arrived in Mongolia with a vision: to provide impoverished youth with access to technical and formal education. This dream took shape with the establishment of a technical high school that began with just 30 students. One of the key figures in this mission has been Br. Andrew Phuong, a missionary from Vietnam who has been in Mongolia since the inception of this important work. We had the pleasure of spending time with him and hearing about the transformative impact of their efforts.

Today, the Don Bosco Centre encompasses a range of vital activities, including:

- Don Bosco Day Care Centre
- Don Bosco Caring Centre
- Don Bosco Youth Development Centre
- Don Bosco Primary and High School
- Don Bosco Technical Centre

This year, we were able to enhance support for the Children's Caring Centre by providing tutoring assistance to students who require additional help. The Centre, following the district governor's order, serves vulnerable youth aged 4 to 17 years. Here, these children can learn and grow in a healthy and safe environment, with activities tailored to their health, education, behavioural development, strengths, and needs. The Centre encourages regular communication with families, fostering socialization and potential reunification.



The Salesians, along with dedicated local staff, continue this crucial work with marginalized youth. In 2025, an Australian volunteer from the 'Cagliari Project' will join for the first time the Salesians in Mongolia. However, with limited local funding, the Don Bosco programs heavily rely on international support.

We invite you to help us continue this important work. Your contributions will directly impact the lives of these children and help us sustain the educational and developmental programs that are so essential for their futures. Thank you for your support!

BEQUESTS

Continue to make a difference

A bequest or legacy is a gift included in your Will. It is an act of generosity that can continue into future generations. By naming the Australian Salesian Mission Overseas Aid Fund (ASMOAF) as the beneficiary of a fixed cash amount or a percentage of the estate will ensure that the funds are dispersed to the project of your choice. For further information, please contact the Salesian Missions Office 03 9377 6060 or by e-mail salmiss@salesians.org.au or our website for more information.

MAKE A DONATION

As Banks are in the process of transitioning away from cheques thus making it increasingly difficult for some donors to support our work. Please contact our office so that we may offer a solution.

To Deposit into our bank account:

Account Name: Australian Salesian Missions Overseas Aid Fund
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 Account Number: 0012 7879
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For online donations

visit our secure website www.salesianmissionsaus.org.au

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