

Dara and one of his classmates at the LaValla School, Cambodia. Read about Tony McDonnell's experience as a volunteer working with the children at the LaValla School in the feature article.

Photograph by Tony McDonnell



solidarity matters

SEPTEMBER 2014

Welcome to the third edition of solidarity matters for 2014, the e-newsletter for the MSol office of the Marist Brothers Province of Australia.



Reflections from a Volunteer... CAMBODIA



Construction at Moulovibazar: BANGLADESH



New bore complete for school water: INDIA



Partnering for school rebuild: TIMOR-LESTE



New developments in Mabiri: BOUGAINVILLE



Christmas with the MSol Team 2014

From the Director

Since June we have experienced a number of successes and the usual challenges that come with development work. Water tanks and bores have been installed to supplement school water supplies, facilities have been renovated across many projects and local programs continue to provide education for the young people we support. Alongside this new projects have commenced in Bangladesh, Bougainville, Cambodia, India and most recently in Vietnam with the tremendous support from our network of Marist donors and volunteers. Thank you!

In August we partnered with Marist Youth Ministry, Brisbane, for the inaugural Winter Conversation, where, for the first time, the Marist network in Brisbane got an insight into the real experiences of Marists in projects in Asia and the Pacific. We hope to do this again.

As we enter the last quarter of 2014 we begin preparations for our annual Christmas Gatherings and launch of the MSol Christmas appeal. We will soon be sending out invitations so if you would like to join us just let us know and we'll make sure you get an invitation.

Sincerely,



Br Allen Sherry
Executive Director, MSol



**Marist**
VOLUNTEERS
AUSTRALIA

...Dara is one of the happiest people I have ever met and his excitement at greeting me each morning gave me a great handle on life's realities...

Tony McDonnell

Reflections from a Volunteer...

Tony McDonnell has had a long connection with the Marist Brothers as a teacher at Marist College North Shore since graduating from university in 1985. In June of last year Tony packed his bags to spend twelve months volunteering in Cambodia at LaValla School for children with disabilities. On his return Tony reflected with MSol on his experience. Here's an excerpt from his reflections.

What was your prior involvement with Cambodia and what inspired you to return for twelve months?

Prior to my 12 months in Cambodia I had travelled with 10 immersion groups to Cambodia. I had also spent 3 months living in the LaValla community in 2012, whilst on long service leave. Since my very first visit to Cambodia I have had a great desire to spend a longer period with the LaValla community. I do not really know where that desire came from. The 12 months stay just seemed "meant to be".

What was an average day at LaValla like and what motivated you each day?

I don't know if I would call any day in Cambodia average! The enthusiasm and eagerness of the students certainly made the task at hand both easy and rewarding. Look at the kids... How could you say "I'm too tired to teach you the drums" when a boy with one prosthetic arm is asking the question with drum sticks in hand. The kids at the school are very special and they certainly provided the motivation.

What similarities are there between Marist College North Shore and LaValla School?

I have always believed Marist North Shore has a great Marist spirit but there is something even more authentic and real about the Marist spirit at LaValla. At both places the importance of relationship is paramount. Maybe because of the Khmer culture or maybe because all the teaching staff at LaValla are disabled but the relationship the teachers have with the students at LaValla is wonderful. They have

a very personal knowledge of each student in their care and seem to be so accessible and available to their students. They know the importance of their role in the life of a disabled person in Cambodia and embrace it.

Why have you chosen this accompanying picture?

I had literally thousands of photos to consider including with this article but I have decided to include a photo of Dara*. Dara has cerebral palsy. He is probably the most disabled person at LaValla. Because of his disability, Dara is in the special class, which means he has had no formal English lessons. But Dara is very bright and has learnt quite good English from his interactions with all the English speaking people who visit LaValla. Despite his disability Dara is one of the happiest people I have ever met and his excitement at greeting me each morning gave me a great handle on life's realities each and every day. (*a fictitious name has been used for privacy reasons)

What would you say to teachers who are considering volunteering abroad for a term?

I would encourage anyone who thinks that volunteering sounds like them to find a way to explore that call. I also think that perhaps the term "volunteering" doesn't really capture the experience I had – I prefer to speak of my time in Cambodia as a personal immersion. Why? Well, I think rather than just going to do good things (which is important in itself), the personal immersion is a journey where you take the time to stop, think, reflect and listen – something that seemed so much easier in Cambodia than in the "clutter" of daily life in Sydney.

For the full interview with Tony please visit our newsfeed:

www.maristsolidarity.net.au/newsfeed

School facilities construction to begin in Moulovibazar, BANGLADESH

We were very happy to receive the news that on the 25th of August 2014, the foundation stone of the Tea Gardens school and hostel project was laid and blessed. In his welcome Br Eugenio Sanz thanked the Marist Brothers worldwide for helping with funds to buy the land. He also thanked the NGOs, including Australian Marist Solidarity (AMS), that are providing funds for the construction of buildings.

Br Eugenio reiterated the aim of this project, which is to build a High School and hostels that will serve the Tea garden workers' children. The school will be open to Muslim and Hindu students to ensure that all local children have the chance to escape poverty. Through this project and

new facilities the Brothers will assist with the formation of the teachers at primary and secondary level, while also continuing to support the Sreemongol parish program in the primary schools scattered throughout the tea gardens. It is also hoped that the school will become a focus, in the Diocese and in the Church of Bangladesh for developing awareness on Children's Rights.

While the first move has been made this project still needs your support to succeed. Contact us today!

Br Brian Kinsella, *Project Coordinator*

[Click here or Contact us to support this school today!](#)

(donations to this project are tax deductible)



Water flows for the students in P.Udayupatti, INDIA

In *solidarity matters* in March 2014 we wrote about the water needs of the Marist Schools at P. Udayupatti in India. Great news came in August to say that the school had finished installing the bore.

The primary and secondary schools are located on the outskirts of Trichy in the south of Tamil Nadu. 1500 students were using the water supply every day when the 25 year old bore on the property failed. This, combined with the failure of the monsoon rains for the previous two years, left the school community in dire circumstances and struggling for safe drinking water, water for preparing meals, washing and for basic hygiene.

With the help of our donors, MSol was able to provide funds to dig a deeper and more reliable well and the necessary pump and filtration equipment. Recently Brother Chinna reported that the new bore is providing a steady flow of clean water and offered his thanks to the Australian Marists who supported this project.

We at MSol thank the schools and individuals who provide the funds to support the projects of the most marginalised in Asia and the Pacific.

Br Brian Kinsella, *Project Coordinator*

[Contact us to support other projects in INDIA today!](#)



Partnering to rebuild St Teresinha Catholic Junior High School, TIMOR-LESTE

In 1999 the Indonesian Military severely damaged or destroyed over 90% of schools in Timor-Leste. The under resourced Timorese school system cannot provide enough places for the young people to attend school. In Ossu damage to the school's roof has rendered classrooms useless during the wet season with teachers having to send students home. The resulting water damage has left the building structurally unstable.

While state schools are supported with funding, many parish-run Catholic schools such as the one in Ossu are in

very poor condition. Ossu Community has now partnered with Burleigh Heads parish in Australia and Australian Marist Solidarity to support the renovation of 6 classrooms, a small library and an administration section.

We are looking forward to the contribution that this will make toward the educational opportunities available to young people in Timor-Leste.

Michael Coleman, *Project Coordinator - Timor-Leste*

[Click here or Contact us to support St Teresinha today!](#)

(donations to this project are tax deductible)



New water tanks and I.T. classes at St Joseph's College, BOUGAINVILLE

St Joseph's College, Mabiri, in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, has been going through a steady transformation over the past 12 months. Recently installed water tanks and guttering are now collecting thousands of litres of water from the roofs of the school buildings thanks to the fundraising efforts of Sacred Heart Middle School in Adelaide. The students at St Joseph's can now drink fresh, clean water all year round and it is simple projects like this that often have the greatest impact.

The second project which has begun is the construction of a computer room - materials have been purchased and are on site awaiting the builders. Once finished, the room

will house 40 computers enabling the students to learn vital computer skills to set them up for their future. Thank you to Parramatta Marist High School who is co-funding this project with MAPS and other private donors.

MSol would like to send a big thank you to all the students, teachers and parents at both of these schools for their fantastic fundraising efforts in supporting the students at St Joseph's College, Mabiri.

Ashley Bulgarelli, *Project Coordinator - Pacific Region*

Contact us to support other projects in BOUGAINVILLE!



You're invited to celebrate Christmas with MSol at a centre near you!

Last year we celebrated Christmas with our supporter network in a new way at Christmas Gatherings in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting our supporters and we're looking forward to doing it again. Here are some dates to mark in your calendar:

Brisbane:	Monday, 10 November	5.30 to 7.30pm
Sydney:	Tuesday, 18 November	5.30 to 7.30pm
Melbourne:	Sunday, 23 November	5.30 to 7.30pm
Adelaide:	Tuesday, 25 November	5.30 to 7.30pm

It will once again be a great opportunity to meet with some of the team from Brisbane, to get an update on some of the major works and for us to thank supporters of our work in person. We'll also be launching the 2014 Christmas Appeal containing a range of new life changing projects to support.

We'll do our best to make sure all of our supporters do get invitations but to make sure you or someone you know gets an invitation please contact us on the details below.

Michael Coleman, *AMS Desk*

Contact us for an invite!



Support education in Asia and the Pacific by joining our supporter network...

CONNECT WITH US TODAY!

MSol Team

BRISBANE

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