

SOLIDARITY MATTERS



MARCH - 2020



2020 SCHOOL CAMPAIGN

Supporting St Louis High
School, Kiribati

KIRIBATI REFLECTIONS

Marist College Ashgrove
students reflect on their
immersion

THE IMPACT OF OUR WORK

How your donations are
having an impact on our
projects

Welcome from the CEO

On behalf of both the Australian Marist Solidarity (AMS) board and team, I want to thank AMS donors for their generous response to our 2019 Christmas Appeal. Your donations will allow children and young people to access education and break free from the cycle of poverty and slavery.

On the horizon, we are already looking towards our End of Financial Year Appeal, which will see us raise vital funds for an inspiring project in Timor-Leste. Given the current health context in Australia, AMS has made the difficult decision to postpone our in-person events, but please watch this space for other opportunities to support this appeal.

At the start of this year the AMS team spent two days preparing our activities for 2020. This planning is critical, as we experience a growth in the demand for support from our projects in the Asia-Pacific region.

We are closely monitoring the impact that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) may have on our projects in this region and we have already been advised that there will be no school immersions to our projects in the early part of this year. We encourage our school partners to continue supporting these projects and to keep these relationships alive until the time comes when visits can recommence. Many of our projects rely on the income from these school partnerships to provide crucial educational services and facilities.

Our 2020 School Kit was recently launched, and I ask that you all view our video on Kiribati. This video gives you an insight into what life is like as a student at St Louis High School in Kiribati. The school is in desperate need of toilets as there are only 4 toilets for the whole school. Connect with our school campaign and help us improve the facilities at St Louis.

Thank you again to all our donors and supporters, your generosity is making a difference in the world through investment in quality education for young people, ensuring they can reach their brightest potential and build a stronger future for their communities.



REBECCA BROMHEAD
CEO





CREATING ONE NEW HUMANITY

2020 School Campaign

The Australian Marist Solidarity 2020 School Campaign Kit can now be downloaded at:

www.australianmaristsolidarity.org.au

- View our 2020 Kiribati Campaign Video
- Download learning and prayer resources
- Read about various fundraising ideas
- Learn about how your school can help support St Louis High School, Kiribati

Following in the footsteps of St Marcellin Champagnat, students will:



Understand



Develop



Recognise



Be Inspired



Be Motivated



Act



KIRIBATI REFLECTIONS | MARIST COLLEGE ASHGROVE

The immersion to Kiribati for me was not only the best experience I've ever had, it also made me realise how amazing humanity is.

I arrived in a foreign country, with a foreign language and with foreign people, yet I was instantly met with warmth and welcoming from the people of Kiribati and the Marist Brothers. The friendliness and pure happiness of the people of Kiribati is something that has completely changed my life.

Over a period of just 10 days, I formed what feels like lifelong friendships with the locals and lifelong bonds with my immersion mates.

For me, the immersion experience to Kiribati embodied the Marist spirituality of love, care, family, joy and faith. I will never forget my experience in Kiribati and I will forever live my life by the lessons and experiences I encountered in Kiribati.

Student

It's hard to articulate exactly what the Kiribati experience meant to me without using a string of clichés: amazing, powerful, life changing. It really was such an intense experience but at the same time felt so completely natural.

It just epitomised the Marist community; where you have these seemingly everyday connections – playing volleyball, helping with homework, having a laugh, sharing a meal – which together hold such an important place in your life. For me, the most extraordinary learning was just about the goodness of people; how easy and natural it is for people to connect.

I felt especially blessed that I got to experience for myself, but also got to watch the boys awaken to this as well. If there was one thing I could do for the community it is to just spread awareness of their country and of the beautiful people who live there.

Teacher 2019



Student teaching class



The opportunity to visit Kiribati and the Saint Louis High School was one that I will cherish for the rest of my life. The connections and relationships I was able to develop, through my immersion into the local culture and community, are incomparable to anything else I have ever experienced.

Here at Ashgrove, we often hear the Marist culture referred to as that of a family. A Marist family that extends so much further than just the sum of its individual parts and this commonality certainly exists in Kiribati.

I was surprised at how quickly I was able to develop deep, intimate, and personal relationships despite language and cultural barriers. I believe that this is due to the unifying nature of Marists, where everyone belongs to the one community despite our differences. In this same respect, spending time in Kiribati, at Saint Louis, gave me such a humbling sense of unity.

Meeting all of the kind-hearted, selfless Kiribatians and being able to experience Kiribati culture was the best thing that has ever happened to me. The most extraordinary learning for me was that the Marist family has no boundaries and we are all one through Marcellin Champagnat.

If given the opportunity, I would love to increase the salaries of teachers, give the students better resources for learning and raise overall awareness about the importance of diet. This would mean a brighter and more sustainable future for all Kiribatians.

Student

“I will forever live my life by the lessons and experiences I encountered in Kiribati.”

The biggest learning point, which still generates many moments of deep introspection and reflection, was an understanding of how privileged we are as well as the impermanence of things. The rich relationships that I built with people I had never met – or may never see again – deeply humbled me. Seeing the students' class environments made me consider how fortunate I am to attend my school and the opportunities and facilities that I take for granted.

After completing my tertiary studies, it is a goal of mine to be able to complete some form or medical aid, working in the Tarawa Hospital, or to assist the local students with their English studies at Saint Louis in Kiribati. Regardless, it goes without question that the experiences and lessons that I learnt in Kiribati have developed my worldview and strengthened my character.

This really was a grounding and humbling activity that made me reflect on the amazing experience that I had in Kiribati, so thank you for that.

Student



The walls of a Kulugia classroom



Kulugia school buildings

A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS

BY NICK HANCOCK; AMS PROJECTS AND OPERATIONS OFFICER

The walls are moving! This was the realisation that raced through my mind as I stood in a classroom in Kulugia, Timor-Leste. I had seen a lot of things in over a decade of teaching in Australia, but I had never seen the walls move.

My eyes travelled up the moving walls to the roof as I tried to assess if it would stay up. My fears of the building crumbling seemed realistic, as we'd just been shown where the other school building had stood ... until it had collapsed in the previous wet season! Now, as the rain began to leak through the roof and the wind grew to a howl, the safety of this building was a real concern.

Since the collapse of the building, all 184 students had been taught in the only standing school structure in the community.

It was made of the same materials as the first: rusted corrugated iron supported by aging timber beams.

The floor was uneven dirt and most of the furniture was warped and broken due to the elements.

I thought of the schools I'd taught at back in Australia and the complaints from staff and students if even the internet or the air-conditioning wasn't working. How would we cope if faced with these conditions?

In Kulugia, school is often abandoned on days with heavy rain or high wind due to safety concerns. Yet quality teaching and learning is taking place in Kulugia.

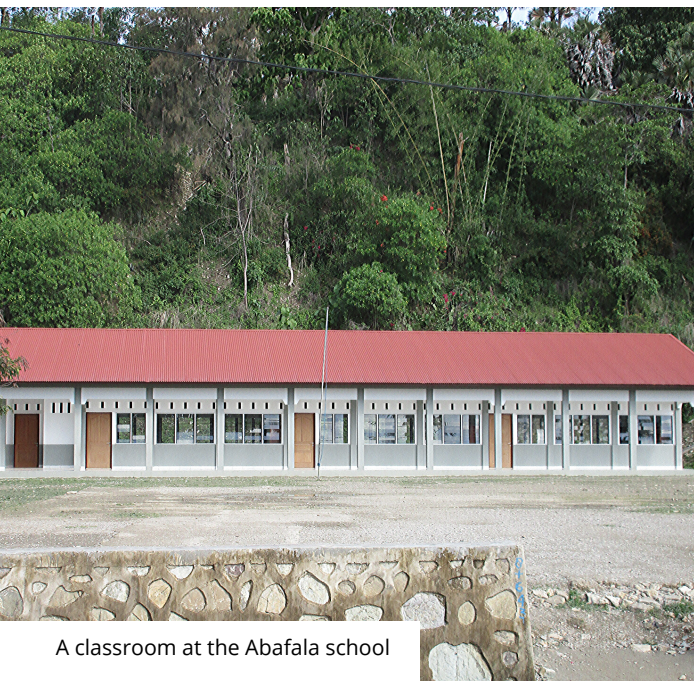
Enthusiastic students sit happily on the dirt floor while an energetic teacher holds their attention. I can't help but wonder what that class would be able to achieve if given a secure building and adequate resources.



Rooftop of the Kulugia school



AMS team with Abafala school staff



A classroom at the Abafala school

"I can't help but wonder what that class would be able to achieve if given a secure building and adequate resources."

A little further up a perilous muddy road, I saw what was possible in Timor-Leste schools. The school of Abafala had once resembled Kulugia but now has two brand new buildings made of brick and cement.

Thanks to the generosity of AMS donors and school immersion groups, the children of Abafala now have comfortable and safe buildings in which to learn and enjoy.

On our tour of the school we saw students working hard, notebooks full of facts and walls, not moving, but proudly displaying student work.

The transformation has not just been in buildings, but also in what students have been able to achieve. Abafala is now ranked as one of the top schools in the district and teachers are now keen to stay in this remote community.

While the contrast between Kulugia and Abafala is stark, the similarities are there. In both places we saw bright-eyed students willing to learn and keen to show off their ability.

Both schools also had hard-working teachers, with a passion for education and wanting to help their students however possible. The main difference is the buildings.

The good news is that we can fix that! AMS is currently fundraising for two Timor-Leste school building projects, in Kulugia and Quelicai. Immersion groups from Australian schools spend time in both communities and have raised impressive sums already.

More funding is needed, but hopefully over the next few years, the rusted corrugated iron shed in Kulugia will be replaced by the brand new, solid building which the children deserve.

THE IMPACT OF OUR WORK



BALAY BANAAG | THE PHILIPPINES

We recently received a poem of thanks from a girl in one of the projects we support in Balay Banaag, which is located in Davao City.

This project is co-funded by Mary Ward International Australia and Raskob Foundation. It is a residential centre that provides care and support for female children of women who work in prostitution.

This project facilitates formal elementary and high school education as well as psychosocial counselling and skills training.

The donations we receive are making an impact on the lives of these children affected by violence and abuse.

However, more needs to be done. Your donation will help protect women and children from violence and abuse.

*You may have seen our different faces
But at the back of our enthusiasm and smile
We have pain and secrets to tell
That sometimes we cannot bear*

*But, why are we still here?
A simple question with one reason
Because there are still people who believes in us
And rescued us in this unfortunate life*

*So many of them, they are not only one
They are instrument of God who helps us even
though they do not know us
They gave donation so to school we can go on
God is very good to us.*

'Rica' aged 17

CHETANA TRIBAL BOYS HOSTEL| NORTH INDIA

On February 9, the 65 boys and young men of the Chetana Tribal Boys Hostel welcomed their families to the first Parents Meeting of the year.

On arrival the parents have their feet washed by the students and are given a cup of water. The parents then bless the students and they all become one tribal group of Santhal.

At the meeting, the new parents are officially welcomed and then told about the hostel rules and regulations and the importance of education. It is during this meeting that the parents are informed of the running costs of the hostel and how donations assist in supporting these costs, with the majority of donations coming from supporters of Australian Marist Solidarity. The parents are also invited to visit the hostel director to learn more about their child's education at the hostel.

Mass is held after the meeting. As part of Santali culture, the students performed a dance and then the parents and the students all sit together for a meal.



Students ready for the feet washing ceremony

The Chetana Tribal Boys' Hostel has been administered by the Marist Brothers since 2010. This Hostel is mainly for the tribal communities in the Diocese of Asansol, the Santhal and other sub-tribal communities. Most families are poor farmers and are living in very poor conditions.

There are 65 boys and young men currently in the hostel. All of them belong to a tribal community and are aged between 8 and 19 years.

82 students have completed their secondary education. Some are now studying at University while others are employed.



Students having dinner with their families



The official party at the 21st birthday celebration. Br Kees and Br Fergus (founding staff) are first and third from left respectively.

MARIST CHAMPAGNAT INSTITUTE | FIJI

The Marist Champagnat Institute (MCI) offers programs to young people who have struggled to fit into mainstream schooling. An initial two-year course focuses on learning how to learn, literacy, numeracy and building self-confidence.

At its completion, students are encouraged to return to mainstream schools or undertake a further two years of vocational training in computing, catering, tailoring, agriculture, engineering, woodwork or childcare.

MCI is supported by AMS donors and



21ST BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

On January 25th, 21 years to the day, the school celebrated the 21st anniversary of its opening. The two founding staff, Br Fergus and Br Kees, still teach at the school and were on hand to join in the celebrations. The day began with mass which was followed by a shared morning tea, a slide show of photos of events over the years and then a shared lunch.

A good number of former students were in attendance and they were invited to take time to come together and set up an Alumni group. Many of them shared stories of their experience at MCI, all speaking highly of the staff who had helped them so much. As is the case with any celebration in Fiji, kava flowed freely along with the sharing of so many good memories.

STUDENT LEADER INDUCTION

The Student Leader induction was held in February this year. Each of the seven classes have two leaders, one boy and one girl. The senior class- Vocational Year 2, have a boy and a girl as Senior Student Leaders.

This year, Ekari and Lui hold these positions. The students were inducted at a special prayer service held at the school. Their parents were there to present them their badges.

The move to use the title 'Student Leaders' as opposed to 'Prefects' was deliberately taken to highlight that, as an inclusive school, MCI is different from the regular, more academically inclined schools. They also have a much smaller cohort.



2020 Student Leaders

FARM DAY

MCI has an extensive area for gardening and each class is allocated its own plot. After the school holidays, the area is rather overgrown. Early in the year, a whole morning is given to weeding, digging and ultimately planting.

Gardening is part of the enterprise education of MCI. The produce, once harvested, is sold by the students. The income is divided on a 60:40 basis. 40% returns to the school to cover the costs of seeds and manure. 60% goes to the students. The income from sales is divided up among the students in the class and placed in their 'Bank Account', which is held in the school. Only when the student leaves school is he or she given the sum of money in their bank account.

Their funds accumulate over the time they are at MCI. It's still early in the year but already a considerable area has been cleared and planted.

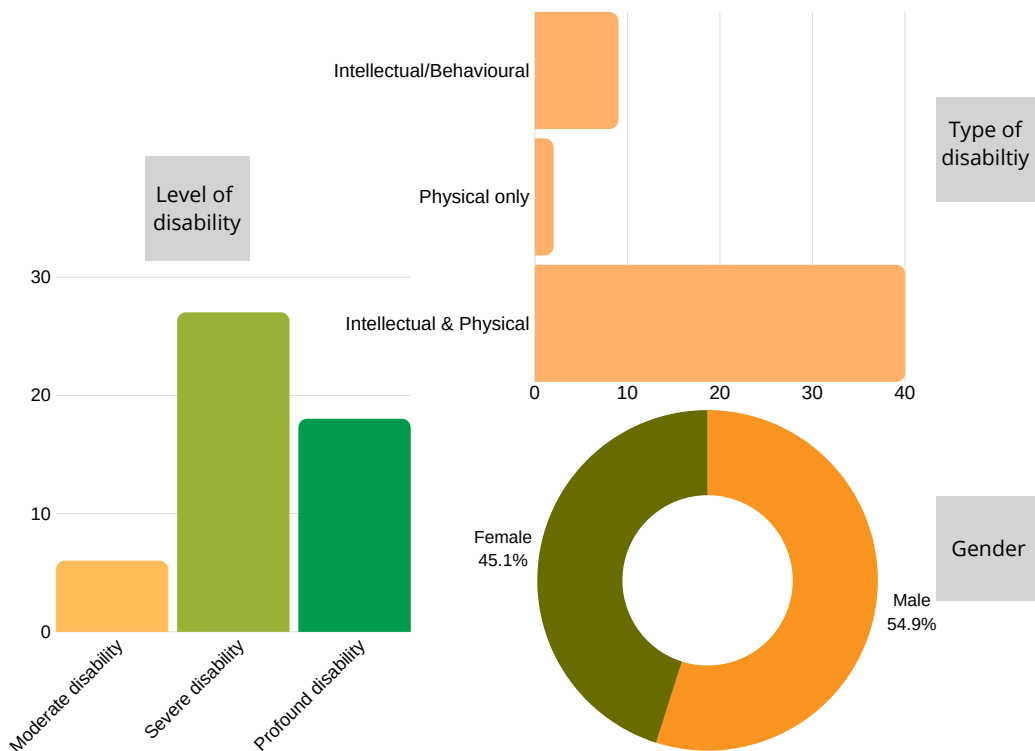


Teachers and students work alongside each other to weed, dig and prepare the garden plots for planting.

ANONDO NEER | BANGLADESH

The Anondo Neer Project was developed by the Marist Missionary Sisters for people with a disability. This project provides life skill training, basic physiotherapy, literacy and numeracy education, income generating skills and opportunities for socialization outside of the home. The services are currently offered to 51 intellectually challenged (many are also physically disabled) and deaf children and young adults.

The project helps with medical care related to the disability and assists with the costs of some medications. It also provides the parents and immediate families of those with a disability with health education and emotional support.



Malina* is a teenager with Down's Syndrome and a low IQ who joined the Anondo Neer Project one and a half years ago. Her parents tried educating her in a local school, however Malina could not cope and her behaviour deteriorated. This led to Malina leaving the school. Malina's parents heard about Anondo Neer and enrolled her in the project. After a month of being in the program her parents saw a change in her behaviour and how happily she participated in all the project activities. Malina is making progress in learning to read and write. She also loves singing and dancing. Currently, she is learning household skills so she can help at home.

Asif*, is a 7 year-old boy with autism, who has been in the Anondo Neer Project for almost two years. It took Asif time to participate in activities as he was very agitated. Gradually he got involved in play activities. Now, he is calm most of the time and sits at the table with other participants for group activities. He likes to colour pictures, listen to music and jump up and down on a little trampoline. He has made friends with some of the other participants.

The Marist Mission Centre (MMC), in collaboration with AMS, has ensured that this project has been able to provide a positive change in the lives of many disabled children and young adults living in Dhaka, Bangladesh. In 2020, the ongoing partnership with MMC will ensure this program continues to effect change for some of the most deprived children in Bangladesh.

*Not their real names.

'Malina' and 'Asif'





Pailin Hostel

PAILIN HOSTEL | NORTH CAMBODIA

On January 3, construction was completed for the Pailin Hostel.

The hostel is situated next to the secondary school and will provide residential accommodation for up to 68 students from poor, rural families who are presently deprived of a secondary education because of the remoteness of their village.

These children typically come from subsistence farming families and cannot afford the necessary transport expenses for their children to travel the long distances to school. The hostel will alleviate the financial burden placed on families and allow these children to complete their full education.

The donations received for the Pailin Hostel through AMS have directly impacted the ability of these children to change their lives and that of their families and communities. Special mention to Marcellin College Bulleen and their fundraising for this project.



Pailin Hostel internal rooms

KATILOSA | TIMOR-LESTE

KATILOSA is situated in Timor-Leste and is one of only two registered disability focused organisations in all of Baucau District, the other being a special school.

Through donations we have been able to provide therapeutic services, including physiotherapy to 169 children and adults in 2019.

Donations to this project are very important as children in Timor-Leste who have a disability are often excluded from society and education.



KATILOSA - A PLACE FREE OF JUDGEMENT AND FULL OF JOY

Name: Theresa Sanchez (not her real name)

Age: 12

Home: Bucoli, Baucau

Theresa was born in the remote area of Bucoli in Baucau. When she turned 5 years of age she could not walk, turn her neck or move her arms and legs. Theresa's family took her to a local clinic for medical treatment, nonetheless there were no changes to her physical condition.

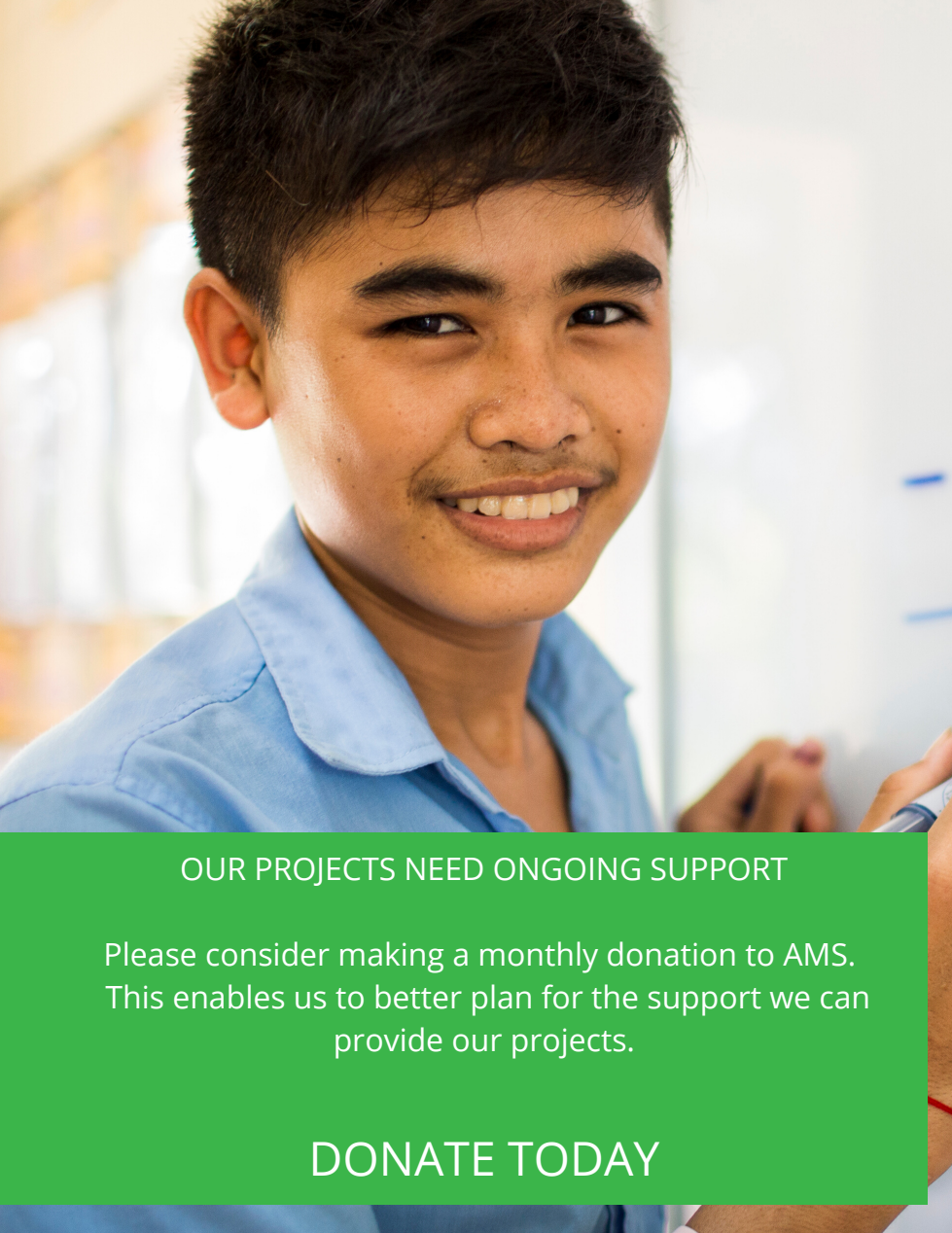
In 2010, KATILOSA visited the Bucoli clinic for an early detection and early intervention program with midwives and nurses. Theresa's mother approached KATILOSA and enquired about the problems that Theresa was having.

The staff made a simple assessment and it was found that Theresa needed special assistance and they advised the family to bring her to Darasula for physical therapy and register for regular home visits. The aim of visiting Theresa at home was to teach her mother, sister, brother and grandmother how to take care of her at home outside of staff visits.

In 2014 and 2015, changes were noticed in Theresa's neck, legs and arms whereby she was able to move freely around her home. Two years later, in 2017, Theresa was independently walking around visiting neighbouring families and sometimes playing with other children in the village.

In 2018, KATILOSA staff meet with Theresa's family to discuss allowing her to attend school which they happily agreed to. Last year, Theresa officially enrolled in school. However, due to not being able to walk the long distance to school, Theresa stopped going to school.

The staff at KATILOSA have encouraged Theresa's family to teach her writing, reading, drawing, and other skills at home while the KATILOSA staff and her family try to find other avenues for Theresa to attend school.



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PO Box 273, Ashgrove West QLD 4060

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OUR PROJECTS NEED ONGOING SUPPORT

Please consider making a monthly donation to AMS.
This enables us to better plan for the support we can
provide our projects.

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"WHAT YOU LEAVE BEHIND IS NOT
WHAT IS ENGRAVED IN STONE
MONUMENTS, BUT WHAT IS
WOVEN INTO THE LIVES OF
OTHERS."

Pericles

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Solidarity Matters

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EDUCATION AND TRAINING