



## FROM THE CEO

Dear friends,

As we near the end of 2020 it is timely to reflect on the challenges that this year has delivered. Many in our Australian community have faced health and economic consequences of the pandemic, if not directly then certainly through our families and communities. Our Victorian communities in particular have demonstrated resilience and fortitude in the face of significant hardship and are able to look forward to a Christmas with loved ones after many months of separation.

Further afield of course the challenges have been even more devastating. Communities already experiencing vulnerability before the pandemic continue to endure extreme lockdowns with few safety nets, limited health services and little access to government relief. For many it is a choice between compliance with restrictions and survival, particularly for those participating in an informal economy. AMS welcomes the commitments made by the Australian Government to maintain aid and development funding in our region and to ensure that access to a vaccine is available to all those who need it.

However 2020 has also provided us with examples of deep joy and hope. As our catch-cry has echoed #COVID can't stop good! Our project partners have continued to ensure that those experiencing vulnerability are not abandoned and that places of belonging, support, learning and hope are ready to embrace our children and young people the moment they can return. In the meantime there have been visits, food drops, connections with health providers, messages, phone calls, lessons via whatsapp and many other vehicles of solidarity to ensure that young people and their families remain supported and connected. To our partners, thank you for everything you have done and continue to do, inspiring us all to hope and to 'be the change' we wish to see in the world.

And of course no reflection on 2020 is complete without noting the significant support of our AMS friends and donors. Our school networks continued to advocate for our projects and raise funds, even when confined to their kitchen tables and bedroom desks. Our supporters came out in droves to respond to the devastation of Tropical Cyclone Harold in Vanuatu and can read here of the successful renovations already of the mechanical classrooms and boys toilets. Your continued support of AMS has meant that none of our projects lost their ability to support their local communities this year. Along with the Vanuatu updates, you'll find in the following pages news from a range of our partners in Timor Leste and an inspiring story from Vietnam.

The AMS team has been energized and inspired by your support and commitment. We've worked hard and are looking forward to a rest over the Christmas period and will come back refreshed and ready to implement exciting and ambitious plans in 2021. We'll have some changes in our team after farewelling Ash and Leigh (see p 7) and look forward to introducing you to our new team members in the new year.

Until then, have a blessed and joy filled Christmas and a healthy and safe start to the new year.

Yours in Solidarity,

Rebecca Bromhead  
CEO

