

SOLIDARITY MATTERS



Spring 2021

**SCHOOL
SUCCESS!**
*Celebrating
achievements*

**UPDATES FROM
OUR PROJECTS**

*Sharing stories from
Asia and the Pacific*

NEWS FROM OUR BOARD

Find out what's happening

Who we are

Australian Marist Solidarity (AMS) works to ensure that all young people have access to educational opportunities.

We believe education has the power to eradicate poverty. With your help, we support grassroots movements run by local people, by empowering them to make a change in their community.

Working across Asia and the Pacific, our projects focus on providing access to education for vulnerable young people, building facilities for the future to ensure safe spaces for learning, and investing in resilience and readiness to help young people who need a little extra support to thrive in learning environments.

Together, we transform the lives of young people by raising awareness of the power of education, and the funds that make it possible.

Together, we bring hope.



Contents

From the acting CEO	3
Around the schools	4
Project updates	6
Board and operations update	11
Spring recipe	12
Board member profile	14
How to donate	15

Got a story?

We'd love to share it with our supporters! Please send it to us at ams@marists.org.au



Thanks to Conor Ashleigh for the cover image and all the other wonderful images of his we use.



From the acting CEO

Dear friends

Welcome to our Spring issue. I'm writing this during COVID restrictions across much of the country. Sincere best wishes to all of our network who are enduring long periods of restriction and lockdown. I hope you are all staying safe and well.

Despite these ongoing challenging times, there's something about Spring with its promise of nature's growth and new beginnings that has us optimistic. Speaking of new beginnings – I'm delighted to share with you our CEO Bec's exciting update. Baby Xavier was born at the end of June, and he is absolutely gorgeous. Massive congratulations to Bec and her family as they enjoy parental leave.

I'm certainly relishing Spring in Brisbane. It's my family's first full one here. We're originally from Ireland – via an enjoyable 10-year stint in Sydney – so I'm in awe of the colours, flowers, and all-around lushness bursting out in the gardens around our building.

That Spring feeling of growth and promise extends to the articles in this issue. Our project partners – despite dealing with devastating COVID impacts – are delivering inspiring results. It's so encouraging to see some projects returning to in-person delivery again, such as at KATILOSA in Timor-Leste. And the exam results from the Chetana boys in India are nothing short of amazing. It's fitting then that our recipe this issue is from Chetana and is a celebration food. It will be Diwali in November and we've included a step-by-step guide for you to make some sweets that are traditional to the region for this occasion. I'm keen to give them a try.

Yours in solidarity

Deirdre

Deirdre Looney
Acting CEO

Staff profile



This issue we would like to introduce you to our Projects Coordinator Nigel Sydney, who joined AMS in March. Nigel has over 15 years of direct client support and project management experience in the community sector, primarily working in homelessness, migration support and community development.

In his AMS role, Nigel is our key liaison contact for our project partners around the world. When COVID restrictions ease, this will involve in-person visits to projects throughout Asia and the Pacific. In the meantime, he's become extremely experienced at Zoom.

Nigel works closely with our in-country partners to provide support throughout the project management cycle, from the initial project design and proposal through to completion, evaluation, and reporting. He is excited to be working with such fantastic project partners on a diverse range of projects.

Nigel relocated to Brisbane in 2019. Prior to this he was living in Melbourne, however, he spent a number of years working internationally in roles within the education and community sectors.

On his days off, Nigel enjoys hiking, travel, scuba diving and more recently enjoying the great spots close to Brisbane to rock climb and trying to learn to surf!

AROUND THE SCHOOLS

John Therry Catholic College



Has COVID delayed your school fundraising plans for AMS this year, like it has ours? Don't worry, here's a plan for you to reap success – well, maybe for next year! We're hoping we might be back to face-to-face learning later this term so we can finalise our fundraising for AMS, which culminates in our annual Plant Show Day.

This is a popular fundraising activity that has become part of the life of our school each year. Here's a month-by-month outline on how to run this event for your own school.

How do I run this event?

1. In early February, create an environment team comprising staff and students. Think of a catchy name for the group like the "Enviro Crusaders".
2. In March, find a suitable place in the school to set up your own nursery.
3. In April, plant seeds and propagate cuttings. Get staff or parents to contribute cuttings or plant seeds for this activity. Useful plants are Australian natives,



herbs, succulents and shrubs. Companies also sell seeds online. Google to find those close to you.

4. In May, June, and July, make sure your team has a roster for watering and transplanting the growing plants into bigger pots over the year. This is important! You want to sell flourishing, healthy plants!
5. In August, as you get close to Spring, advertise the sale in the school newsletter. You can call your event "AMS Spring Plant Sale: Welcome to Spring – get your garden breathing and blooming again!"
6. You can get flyers organised with the plants you have for sale and the prices. If you are using cuttings, then you are making 100% profit! Take photos of students getting involved



in planting to show off their expertise.

7. As you publicise, remember to include a quote from Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* ("Praised Be") who has proclaimed that we create an "ecological citizenship":
"Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs" (n.1)
8. In September, host the sale.
9. In October, donate the profits to AMS.
10. In November... get ready to do it all again next year!

By Gavan Martyn
Teaching & School Operations
Coordinator, John Therry Catholic
College

AROUND THE SCHOOLS

Educational resources

Need some information, lesson plans or presentations about our project work for vulnerable people and communities across Asia and the Pacific? Don't forget that our AMS website contains a hub of educational resources for students and teachers.

These materials contain useful information on the communities we work with, and outline how our projects respond to the overseas development requests of our partners.

Examples of some of our materials include our 2021 School Campaign.

This year's campaign, *Fratelli Tutti: The Spirit of Solidarity*, supports the Marist Foundation Timor-Leste. We have produced a range of resources to introduce both high school and primary students to the beautiful nation of Timor-Leste; help them understand a little of its history, culture, and relationship with Australia; and engage them with prayer and learning activities to shape our engagement with

Timor-Leste through the inspiring framework of the Pope's latest encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*.

There's a full kit, as well as a video and poster, and heaps of fundraising ideas.

We've also produced a suite of fact sheets on 12 of the countries in which our projects are based.

You can download all of these educational resources at australianmaristsolidarity.org.au

Fratelli Tutti

The Spirit of Solidarity



PROJECT UPDATES

Kuya Centre | Philippines

At the end of July, the Kuya Centre for Street Children in Manila celebrated their students' success during the school year with a recognition day.

It was a celebration and recognition of the hard work and dedication of the children and staff to rise up and continue on despite the difficult challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

All seven of the remaining children at the centre received awards for doing exemplary work on their academic studies despite the restrictions they experienced.

Non-formal education was also continuously maintained as part of the centre's services this year.

These studies included spiritual and values formation, social sciences, arts and crafts, physical education, and psychoeducation.

A school day at Kuya is divided into two parts: a morning session focused on online and modular classes for academic education, and an afternoon scheduled to accommodate the non-formal sessions.

Physical education this year involved jujitsu training, conducted virtually. Social science classes explored nature, the community, and environmental concerns.

This helped the children's awareness of the outside world as they have been cooped up inside the centre for more than a year with limited outdoor interaction.

Psychoeducation focused on emotion management and communication skills.



PROJECT UPDATES

Chetana Tribal Boys' Hostel | India

We are delighted to share this inspiring news from our project partners at the Chetana Tribal Boys' Hostel, India: their Year 10 students achieved fantastic results in recent final exams. All nine boys received grades of A and above!

Like many of our other project countries, COVID-19 impacts have made schooling extremely difficult in India in 2021.

Project coordinator Br Jiji said the students had encountered many obstacles, such as restrictions, lockdowns, and huge rates of COVID transmission throughout the region.

Schools have been completely shut due to restrictions, so basically the entirety of the students' learning has come from the on-site tutors at the hostel. This makes the grades they received even more impressive!

The boys have also been separated from their families as visits were not permitted under restrictions and the boys have not been allowed to return to their villages. "We are happy that all the boys passed the exam," Br Jiji said. "Thank you so much AMS! Because of the AMS support we are able to help the boys for their future life."

The Chetana Boys' Hostel has been administered by the Marist Brothers since 2010. The hostel is mainly for the ethnic minority communities in the Diocese of Asansol, the Santhal and other sub-tribal communities. Most students are part of poor farming families living in impoverished conditions.

There are currently 55 boys and young men in the hostel, which is operating at reduced capacity because of COVID lockdowns. All of them belong to an ethnic minority community and are aged between 9 and 15 years.

Due to extreme family poverty, their families had been previously unable to send them to school, with many children only eating one meal a day.

However, as the hostel is largely subsidised by generous AMS supporters, only a small co-payment is required from families for the boys to receive schooling and accommodation at the hostel.

This co-payment generates an investment by the family in their child's wellbeing. The children return to live and work with their families during holidays, and the families value the education their

child receives. If the boys weren't at the hostel, they would likely not be attending school.

As well as accommodation, the hostel provides simple and nutritious food to the boys (see our Rasgulla recipe on page 12), and in some cases basic medical needs. Classes are provided to prepare the boys in subjects such as reading and writing in Bengali and mathematics. For students having difficulties in these subjects, tutors are provided to assist them.

The hostel endeavours to keep the children in school and thus broaden their future prospects. Ex-students often go on to further study, with some entering religious life.



PROJECT UPDATES

Operation Rainbow | India

We are in awe of our project partners at Operation Rainbow, who provide support, love and care to families and children affected by HIV in Tamil Nadu, India.

A recent seminar at the Marcellin Trust Community Hall at Trichy included a talk on healthy medicines and natural food habits and other tips for keeping bodies healthy.

Cultural dances delighted the audience as did a delicious lunch.

Thanks so much Br Suresh and your team for all your hard work and dedication.



ICFP | Timor-Leste

It was an exciting end of semester for our team at the Instituto Catolico Para Formacao de Professores (ICFP) in Timor-Leste, with the publication of a research book by 11 staff.

Written in Tetum, it provides results of research on teaching and learning, and will be a reference for students and for teachers in Timor-Leste schools.

We had a 'launch' during the celebration of the Feast of Marcellin Champagnat, the founder of the Marist Brothers, on 4th June. Mestra

Avila, Mestre Silvanio and Mestre Mariano received their author copies of the new publication. Teachers received their personal copy of the book – in English, the title is *Developing Education: Today and for the Future in Timor-Leste*.

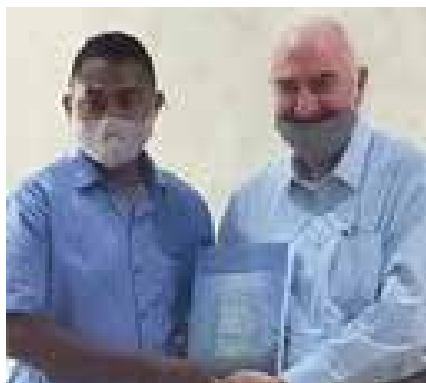
As you can imagine, the teachers are so proud of themselves. I am very proud also as it has taken four years to write, edit and publish!

Staff are now looking at online courses that they can study as personal professional development for this year. They choose courses

of study that are related to their teaching and add to their knowledge and capacity in the classroom.

Last year, teachers studied courses in philosophy, science teaching, improving discipline in the classroom, music education, and teaching Portuguese as a second language. Two teachers completed a course in Leadership Development and have gone on to begin English studies in preparation for applying for a PhD. A great achievement!

Margie Beck AM, ICFP Deputy Director



PROJECT UPDATES

Quelicai | Timor-Leste

There's been excellent progress on another of our major projects: rebuilding and reconstruction work at St Terezinha's Primary School in Timor-Leste.

St Terezinha's in Quelicai is a regional educational hub for 12 other remote primary schools in the eastern end of Timor-Leste. Like many schools in this developing country (as our 2021 school campaign outlines), foreign occupation, war, extreme poverty, and a lack of basic infrastructure caused St Terezinha's to fall into disrepair. There haven't been any building upgrades in nearly 40 years. Thankfully, because of our AMS donors, that is now changing. St Terezinha's is on the road to recovery. We're just past Week 18 of this massive construction project,

and it's already more than a third of the way completed! This is fantastic progress, especially since Timor-Leste has been either in lockdown or under restriction for most of this time. Our project manager also unfortunately contracted COVID-19 and was quarantined for

two weeks (thankfully he remained asymptomatic). Procurement of materials was also difficult, but cement, sand and iron bars were finally able to be obtained and shipped to the site.



Katilosa | Timor-Leste

The Inclusive Education program at KATILOSA, Timor-Leste hasn't been able to operate for most of the year due to lockdowns. In some great news, restrictions lifted in August and students are now back at the centre!



PROJECT UPDATES

St Marcellin School | Bangladesh

In a great example of the caring community work of these project partners, new students this year at St Marcellin School, Bangladesh, had Brothers, Sisters and educators visit to help them gain confidence with remote learning. Well done to the team.



Balay Banaag | Philippines

It was a busy school year for the children of the Balay Banaag project. Here are some of the students showing their report cards, medals and certificates. All of the students will move up to the next level!

And we are delighted to share that one of our high school graduates, Regine, who achieved high honours, is now continuing on to a college degree in Computer Engineering. Well done to all students!

The new school year has just commenced in the Philippines, although face-to-face classes have not been able to resume due to lockdown restrictions.



GOVERNANCE

Board update

The AMS Board met in August and considered a number of matters, including the following: The Board received updates on the situation facing several **AMS project partner countries** in the region, including Fiji, Myanmar, India, Bangladesh, Cambodia and Timor-Leste and continues to keep an eye on the challenges facing many of our partner communities.

AMS Directors continue to monitor progress against the **2021 budget** and are pleased that income and expenditure are tracking well so far this year. The **2022-24 budget** planning has commenced and will be brought to the Board for review and approval later this year.

Following review from the Finance and Risk Committee, the Board has approved updates to the **Privacy Policy**.

The Board was provided with an update on **insurance policies** and checked in with the **AMS Risk Register**.

AMS Directors continued to participate in 'deep dive' discussions as part of the strategic planning process, most recently discussing the topic of the theory of change and measuring impact. The Board is preparing the meet in October to formalise the **2022-24 AMS Strategy**, incorporating learnings from the 'deep dive' themes discussed during the year.

Operations update

Throughout this edition, you will see some of the fantastic work being achieved by our project partners, despite many challenges caused by ongoing COVID lockdowns. There has been **strong progress** on the build at St Terezinha's Primary School in Quelicai, Timor-Leste; and **impressive exam results** from the boys at the Chetana hostel in India and the students at the Kuya Centre for Street children in the Philippines.

AMS has been looking forward to **connecting with friends** in Melbourne and Brisbane in November this year. With restrictions in place across much of the country we have made the difficult decision to move at least the Melbourne event online (see right).

In August the team spent a half-day offsite attending a **formation day** with other members of Marist Centre Brisbane. The team visited the

Ngutana-Lui Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Studies Centre, which was a wonderful opportunity to learn about the richness and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

Preparation of the **2022-24 AMS budget** has commenced.

AMS recently advertised for a number of volunteers to support us in our work as a small team. We had an **overwhelming response** and look forward to welcoming a number of volunteers on board in the next month. AMS would like to thank all of our volunteers for the amazing contribution they make that helps us to achieve our goals.

Preparation has commenced for the **AMS Christmas Appeal**, to be officially launched at the end of October.

Supporter events

As mentioned in our Operations update (bottom left), we've recently decided to postpone our planned face-to-face supporter appreciation event in Melbourne (and possibly Brisbane) in November until COVID restrictions have lifted. We are hoping to reschedule these for the first half of 2022.

In the meantime, we are arranging an Australia-wide Zoom event in November. It will be hosted by an AMS special guest. We will provide supporters with an overview of our 2021 activities, and share details of our Christmas campaign.

We will shortly email all supporters details of how to register for this event.



SPRING RECIPE

This is a traditional Bengali sweet recipe of juicy milk-based dumplings. A perfect time of year to enjoy rasgulla is at Diwali, which occurs this year on Thursday 4 November. This is the recipe used by the chef at the Chetana Boys' Hostel.

Rasgulla



Ingredients

2 litres milk, 1 cup sugar, 2 tbsp lemon juice or vinegar, 3 cardamon pods, thin cloth.

Step 1

Make chenna. Rinse a heavy-bottomed saucepan – this will prevent the milk from being burnt. Pour in the milk and bring to a boil over a medium-high heat. Keep stirring. When milk is about to come to a boil, pour 2 tbsps of lemon juice or vinegar into the milk. Keep stirring. The milk will begin to curdle.

Step 1



Turn off the heat and stir well until it curdles completely. If it doesn't, add another tbsp of lemon juice.

Step 2

Pour 2 tbsps of ice cold water or some ice cubes to the mixture – this helps the cheese stay soft and prevents it from cooking further. Allow to rest for 2 mins.

Step 3

Line a colander with a thin cloth. Pour in the milk mixture and rinse well to remove the lemon flavour. Wrap the chenna in the cloth and

Step 2



Step 3



continue rinsing under running water until it cools down. Make a knot in the cloth – squeeze to remove as much excess water as possible. Then hang it on a hook to keep draining for between one to three hours.

Step 4

You want the chenna to be moist but not have dripping water or whey in it. To test if it is the right consistency, take a small portion and smear it on a smooth chopping board – it needs to be non-sticky and grainy or crumbly.



Step 4



DIWALI FESTIVAL

Diwali is known as the 'festival of lights' because houses, shops and public places are decorated with small oil lamps called 'diyas'. Diwali always falls sometime between October and November, but the exact date varies each year as the Hindu calendar is based on the Moon. In 2021, Diwali is on Thursday 4 November. For many people this

five-day festival honours Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. Lamps are lit and windows and doors are left open to help Lakshmi find her way into people's homes. Other ways that Hindus celebrate the festival include:

- spring-cleaning the home
- wearing new clothes
- exchanging gifts (often sweets and dried fruits) and preparing festive meals

- decorating buildings with fancy lights and huge fireworks displays.
- Thanks to BBC Bitesize (www.co.ukbitesize) for this handy guide.*



Step 5

Knead the chenna with your fingers, until it turns smooth and uniform, which may take three to five minutes. The kneading is to produce a uniformly smooth mixture – do not over knead, which can lead to shrinkage.

Step 6

Divide the dough into 18 portions. Roll into smooth balls that are crack free. Don't make them too large as they double in size when cooked. Cover and set aside.



Step 6



Step 7

Add sugar to a wide and fairly deep pot (4 litres is ideal).

Step 8

Add water and cardamom pods. Dissolve the sugar and bring to a rolling boil. Remove cardamom and keep the syrup bubbling.

Step 9

Add the balls to the syrup, cover the pan and boil for about 10 minutes. After five minutes, gently stir the sugar syrup with a skewer without



Step 8



touching the balls. If the syrup is boiling too rapidly, reduce the heat – the key is to maintain a steady temperature.

Step 10

The rasgulla will double in size first then reduce slightly – if you remove the lid for too long, they will shrink. Keep the pot covered before turning off the stove, and do not remove until the temperature has cooled. Serve rasgulla chilled or at room temperature.



Step 10



60 SECONDS WITH Michael Sinclair, AMS Board

Q. *How did you come to know about/connect with AMS?*

A. I first became involved with AMS through Br Alan Sherry. As a former student of the Marist Brothers in Sydney in the 1960s I was familiar with the Brothers and looking to undertake some volunteer work with them.

Q. *What aspect of work of AMS are you most passionate about?*

A. I have a range of skills and experience as a civil and canon lawyer which I offer to assist AMS achieve its objectives. To paraphrase St Paul, we all have a responsibility to use the talents we have to bring the Gospel alive. In my case, I am keen to ensure the governance structures in the organisation create a well-organised and accountable

Catholic body in the Marist tradition, ready to respond to the overseas development requests of our partners in the Province area.

Q. *What is your role with AMS?*

A. I am a Director and Company Secretary.

Q. *Why do you support AMS?*

A. The organisation's values and purpose resonate with me. Education is key to assisting people to improve not just their living standards but their communities as well. AMS has demonstrated how effective an efficiently operated organisation working with various partners can put the Gospel into action in our region.

Q. *What is your wish for 2021?*

A. There are several. That AMS continues to build strong

relationships with the funders and donors who support us. That those donors see and appreciate the very real difference their support of AMS makes in the development projects in the Province area. Finally, that Australia is a leader in assisting developing nations in their response to COVID.



WAYS TO HELP



Together, we can make a difference. Our work is only possible because of our generous donors and supporters. You can help us in whatever way is best for you.

Make a monthly donation

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible. Call 07 3354 0600 or donate securely at www.australianmaristsolidarity.net.au

Get your school involved

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible. Head to www.australianmaristsolidarity.net.au/learn on how your school can help.

Keep up-to-date

Sign up to the AMS newsletter www.australianmaristsolidarity.net.au/sign-up-for-the-latest-news

Leave a gift in your will

If you are able, we encourage you to consider leaving a legacy that will live on.

www.australianmaristsolidarity.net.au/partnerships/gifts-in-your-will

Workplace giving

One of the most cost effective and simple ways of making a donation.

Head to www.australianmaristsolidarity.net.au/partnerships/workplace-giving for more.

Get active

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and Youtube, and read our updates at www.australianmaristsolidarity.net.au/news-2

\$55 could pay for a new desk



Your gift can transform a child's education

Your monthly gift to AMS can empower vulnerable children through education. By donating monthly, you will be helping to build sustainable facilities to ensure safe places for learning.

PLEASE DONATE TODAY

To make a cash, cheque or credit card donation, fill in this form and mail to:
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QLD 4060

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All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

A gift in your will can leave a legacy to transform the education of future generations of young children.

Once you have remembered your loved ones, would you please consider leaving a gift in your will?

☐ **Please send me information about leaving a gift in my will to AMS.**

Connect with us to find out more.



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