

# World Bulletin

Spring 2021

Prepared Exclusively for Special Friends of Salesian Missions  
A Written Testimony Of How You Bring God-Saving Grace To A Troubled World

## Women Can Lead the Way—Today, and Tomorrow

If poverty has a female name, then so, too, does its solution: *Rupa. Grace. Priscilla. Jency.*

From India to Ghana, South Africa and back, these women – and thousands more like them – are taking steps to create better opportunities for themselves and their families. And they’re doing it with help from the Salesians.

“Empowering women through education, workforce preparation, life skills training, access to preventive health care, and more – these things have always been at the heart of our mission,” says Father Gus Baek, director of Salesian Missions. “More than ever, amid a global pandemic that has disproportionately affected females of all ages, it is absolutely critical that we continue to support and grow such efforts – so that women can lead the way forward into a more equitable society for all.”

Women have always shouldered the heaviest burdens of care for their families and communities. Pandemic-related



confinement and its ripple effects have only multiplied their workloads and stress. Rupa, for example, needed to find livable-wage work to support her suddenly unemployed parents. Jency lost her teaching job, yet refused to abandon her students – gathering more than 40 of them around a village tree each day. And for months, Priscilla pulled 12-hour shifts as a hospital nurse, even though she’d retired.

Such examples highlight the centrality of women’s contributions to a healthy, functioning society – as well as the ongoing

barriers they face in achieving it: poor employment prospects, wage inequality, inadequate social support, and more. That’s why Salesian programs around the world work to eliminate those barriers in the more than 130 countries where they serve.

In India, for example, students like Rupa can train to become tailors at the Don Bosco Human Resource Development Center in Hyderabad, and graduate ready to start their own businesses. In Ghana, young women like Grace can learn the skills they need to work in traditionally male-dominated careers, such as electronics. And in South Africa, female-led training programs at the Don Bosco Educational Projects in Johannesburg prepare young women to become welders while reminding them “always to remember your worth.”

This month, we invite you to join us in celebrating the collective potential of women, represented by just these few small examples around the world.

## This Month’s Child



Name: Hector  
Age: 10 Years Old  
Home: Bolivia

When Hector first arrived at the Salesian-run Mano Amiga home in Santa Cruz, he came with nothing: no home to speak of, no family to love him, no information about his past, and no memory of where he came from.

Even if he *had* remembered, he wouldn’t have told anyone. At just five years old, Hector’s early traumas were so great that he simply refused to talk.

“We don’t know how much these little ones have suffered in the past,” says one of our

missionaries. “But there’s a special reason why God has brought them to us.”

Indeed. For Hector, the Salesians have been his only family. And during the past five years, he has flourished under their care.

Now able to talk and read, he attends school during the day and enjoys the carefree childhood that he deserves. And at night, he says a prayer for other kids like him, that they may find their way home to Mano Amiga, too.

## This Month’s Call For Prayer

Spring is a season of renewal and rejuvenation. Please pray that suffering children, families and communities around the globe are given the strength, hope and support they need to resurrect their lives and face brighter days ahead.



# Monthly Missions Report...

## In Brazil...



*Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.*

Inspired by this wisdom, the Salesians in rural Meruri are doing just that. Except they're teaching women instead.

In partnership with the female-led AREME association, and with technical support from the Dom Bosco Catholic University in Campo Grande, missionaries recently launched a fish farming project to benefit indigenous Boe Bororo women. Since the beginning of the year, AREME members and their families have successfully established and stocked six basins in previously barren local ponds, with an initial harvest of more than a half a ton of fish!

In addition to providing an income for AREME members, selling the fish supports the program's sustainability through reinvestment. Fish farming also means that *all* local residents now have access to protein, which has already made a positive impact on community health.

## In Equatorial Guinea...

For a frightening moment, it seemed that war had erupted in the capital city of Bata. After an accidental explosion at the Nkoantoma military barracks leveled homes, injured hundreds, and sent a thick plume of smoke high into the air, the emotional and physical impacts were similar.

As is so often the case, traumatized and displaced residents immediately fled to the Salesians for help.

Already, missionaries at the Salesian Spanish Institute had been providing daily meals for hundreds of families struggling to eat during the pandemic. Without hesitation, they welcomed 500 more – with food, temporary shelter, clothing, and medicine.

While full recovery and reconstruction will take time, our missionaries are committed to the cause. With help from kind friends like you, they look forward to restoring a sense of normalcy among the community they hold so dear.



## In Mongolia...

Clean water is a precious resource – especially in landlocked Mongolia, where more than 30 percent of the country's population lacks access to it. But things look a little different in rural Shuvuu.



Here, a Salesian-managed "Catholic well" offers rare peace of mind to more than 350 impoverished families whose modest homes do not include running water. Instead of relying on unprotected lakes and streams for their daily drinking, cooking, and washing needs, residents can now collect the clean water they need, right in their own backyard.

Amid a global pandemic in which frequent handwashing is a must, this opportunity has proven even more critical to their health and well-being.

Looking ahead, missionaries hope to bring clean water to more communities throughout the country ... one well at a time.

**Watch a video on this water project at: [salesianmissions.org/water-mongolia](http://salesianmissions.org/water-mongolia)**

## Missionary of the Month: Fr. Omar Delasa

In 2006, when Omar Delasa, M.D. first visited what is now South Sudan as a newly minted Salesian missionary, he was smitten. Today, thanks to Tonj Project Onlus – a charitable initiative he founded to benefit Salesian works in the country – that love has borne remarkable fruit.

It began with the John Lee Memorial Hospital, a 50-bed maternity and surgical facility estab-

lished in 2014 to provide free care to those who couldn't afford it. Since then, Tonj Project Onlus has grown – and now takes a multi-pronged approach to addressing the root causes of poverty: funding Salesian-led clean water projects, nutritional programs, health prevention campaigns, scholarships, and more.

"There are many forgotten lives; there are problems that nobody wants to take on,"



Fr. Omar says. Yet *he* takes them on, with a compassion rooted in the small Italian village where he grew up. "People help each other starting from the little things," he explains.

Of course, for the residents of Tonj, Fr. Omar's assistance is anything but.

## Nurturing the Potential of Woman and Girls

Dear Friends,

Recently, we celebrated International Women's Day: an annual event that recognizes their economic, political, and social achievements *and* calls the world to greater action on their behalf.

Today, I find myself reflecting on this mandate. Females, as UN Women observes, "stand at the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, as healthcare workers, caregivers,

innovators, community organizers, and as some of the most exemplary and effective national leaders in combating the pandemic." At the same time, the injustices that impoverished women bear have only grown during the pandemic.

That's why I'm proud of our ongoing commitment to empowering girls and young women through education. *But our work is far from complete.*



Together, we will continue to grow programs that promote gender equity and help girls achieve their full potential.

With sincere gratitude,

*Fr. Gus Baek*

Fr. Gus Baek, S.D.B.



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