

# MARIST ASIA FOUNDATION

## Annual Report 2014



Education Programmes | HIV AIDS Health Programme | Migrant Support Programme

### Who we are

Marist Asia Foundation is a work of The Society of Mary (Marists) responding to needs in Asia. The Project began in 2006.

### What we do

The Marist Mission in Ranong serves Burmese Migrants on the Thailand / Burma Border through Education, Health and Migrant Support Programmes.

### Compassion in Action

In the developed world it is easy to take so many things for granted. Rubbish collection, footpaths, clean water. Many of us may know nothing of the fear when police are stopping everyone and checking for documents at the end of the street.

It is a sad picture when at a workshop dealing with migrants and their rights, a person with many years experience quotes police and military as viewing migrants as 'walking ATM machines'. Always vulnerable to be found without proper documents, easily forced to give over money to escape being sent back to Burma. Daily life as a migrant has many hardships.



## 2014 Achievements

- In May the Marist Mission in Ranong was granted charitable foundation status in Thailand and became 'Marist Asia Foundation'.
- Development work continued at the Marist Centre to include parking area and sports / activity areas for students
- 9 Students completed a University Diploma bringing the total number of graduates to 27 in partnership with Australian Catholic University.
- HIV AIDS monthly self help meetings continue to be very successful in providing education, friendship and a supportive community.
- Preschool enrolments are at maximum level, and retention rates for secondary education programme levels 1-4 have improved. More students are applying to enter the Burmese Migrant Secondary Education Programme (BMSP) than we can cater for. All of these signs show the support of the local community and a positive trend for Burmese Migrant Education in Ranong.
- Several staff worked as translators supporting the Ranong Burmese Migrant Registration Process 2014

We bring hope in the midst of the Ranong Burmese Migrant Community on the Thailand / Burma Border.

We experience the sadness of parents who are so desperate they send their young girls away from home to find work and are tearfully grateful when offered some support.

We experience the sadness of HIV Patients sitting rejected and abandoned, tearful for their future and their children and turn to us for help.

We experience every day the great joy of 200 children coming to school. We know every child in the classroom is a great success.

Every smile of an HIV Patient feeling support in the midst of their loneliness at home is the joy of feeling compassion in action.

Every Migrant worker growing in confidence with new skills and support behind them to reach for their goals is a light being lit for a brighter future.

Ranong continues to be one of the largest population centres for Burmese migrant workers. Working in the Thai fishing industry continues to be the pathway for many.

Their plight and hardship escaping poverty in their homeland remains relatively unchanged. It is still very unclear if substantial change will take place with elections in November 2015.

Enjoy reading what your support has achieved. With your help we will continue to support some of the most forgotten and poor in Asia.



# EDUCATION

Preschool Programme | Secondary Education Programme | University Online Diploma

## Poverty

Marist Asia Foundation is continually aware that even though parents want to give their children education, their financial difficulties are great. 90% of Burmese children leave school age 12 because of financial struggles.

## A moving migrant community

As economic refugees seeking work and a hope for a better future for their children, Burmese Migrants face uncertainty about finding work. This significantly affects their children's educational engagement and achievement. In 2014 there were increasing difficulties in obtaining proper documentation to be legal.

## Being 'Burmese'

Social barriers and discrimination constantly affect Burmese Migrants working in Thailand. The lack of opportunity and difficulty entering the Thai Education System continues the cycle of poverty among Burmese.



## Preschool Programme

Poverty is a distressing daily difficulty in the life of Burmese Migrant families.

To provide for their families, parents frequently work two jobs and young children are either left unattended at home, wandering about on the streets, collecting rubbish, or accompanying a parent working in an unsafe work environment such as a fish or charcoal factory or marketplace.

Our Preschool programme makes a significant difference in the community with 100% of children starting school from our preschool / kindergarten.

The Preschool Programme aims to

- Provide a programme for migrant children to enable parents to go to work.
- Provide a positive early childhood experience of education for children and parents so as to promote further education.

Ranong Migrant worker registration statistics in 2014-2015

## every child is special



Moe Ma Kha (not her real name) is a special student of our preschool program. Her parents died and currently she is living with her grandparents. Her grandparents are illegal migrants in Ranong. Her grandfather is often away from home because he is working on the boat. Her grandmother works in a small fish factory and their living is not so easy. They look frightened and are always hiding from the police.

Moe Ma Kha really enjoys coming to school and playing with other kids. She also likes learning and helping the teachers. Previously she was very thin and looked unwell because of a lack of nutrition. Our program provides milk and snacks every afternoon and she likes having them after the nap. Now she looks well and has gained weight. She is stronger and looks much happier to play around with other kids. Normally students leave our program after kindergarten but Moe Ma Kha will be studying for another year in our program even though she has finished kindergarten. This is because her grandmother cried and shared to the teachers that she doesn't know where to send her grandchild because she might face discrimination.

suggest an estimated 10,000 children with only 20% of these children actually beginning school.

In 2014 the preschool programme continued at maximum capacity with 75 students with a waiting list of 26 families.

Parent Meetings share a continued request to begin a primary school programme which shows a high level of support from parents

Parents share they enjoy learning Thai and English language through their children and their homework.

Monthly Parent contributions toward school tuition (330 THB), and transport (300 THB) reached 90%

Graduation certificates and folders of learning help children continue their education in Burmese Learning Centres, Thai Schools, as well as support their entrance in Burmese schools back in Myanmar.

Marist Asia Foundation continues to support and encourage families to send their children to Burmese Learning Centres and Thai Schools for their primary education.



*100% of our preschool children begin school*

# SECONDARY

Preschool Programme | Secondary Education Programme | University Online Diploma

## Burmese Migrants Education

There are an estimated 20,000 Burmese Migrant Children in Ranong and the surrounding area. There are limited education opportunities and 90% of children finish education to work at age 12.

## Child Protection

Lack of attendance at a school raises the risk of child trafficking or pressures to work in the fish factories.

## Growing leaders

With less than 20 Burmese Migrants receiving a formal education experience in a Thai Secondary school Marist Mission Ranong responded with a Child Protection Programme (15 students) inviting at risk children off the streets, and a Secondary Education Programme (for 75 students) who have the ability, personal motivation and parent support for 4 years of secondary education.



## Secondary Education

The Burmese Migrant Secondary Education Programme (BMSP) responds to the significant need for education of Burmese Migrants Children aged between 12-18.

Statistics continue to show the challenge of providing education to the Burmese Migrant Community. 90% of Burmese Migrant Children still continue to leave school at age 12.

The Secondary Education Programme aims to empower Burmese teenagers with a basic, well rounded education to enable them to be productive members of their communities

In 2014 the Marist Mission in Ranong continued the Child Protection Programme providing an education programme for 15 Burmese students from the surrounding area of the Marist Centre who are not attending any Learning Centre.

In 2014 we had 61 students applying to enter the Secondary Education Programme. We accepted 41 students and created 2 year 1 classes.

Senior students have been encouraged to develop an attitude of service to their Burmese Community, have helped



## coming back to school

A continual challenge for Burmese Migrants is to consider giving their child an education beyond age 12.

Typically at this age, bodies are big enough to begin manual work and earn some much needed financial support for the family.

In November 2014 we received a message that two of our students would not return to school. Financial problems meant they were being sent away to another town to work. The girls worked extremely long hours in the service industry, feeling unsafe. Working through the night from 8pm to 6am. Missing family, friends and crying, an Aunty alongside the girls shared with the family to let them continue their education.

They returned to Ranong asking if they could come back to school. They study now with a deeper recognition of how education can provide them with a brighter future and a better job.

An Uncle shared at a meeting his apologies for withdrawing the girls from school but shared it is so difficult to manage. Any more costs just mean they can't continue. *Your support makes all the difference.*

at Burmese Learning Centres as sports facilitators, and been involved in community awareness programmes around Rubbish and Human Trafficking.

The purchase of 3 new computers and a large TV screen have enhanced the students computer learning seen as a vital skill for a future job.

In 2014 21 students continued the 'Non Formal Education Programme' designed to assist Burmese Migrant students to be able to enter the Thai education system for further studies.

In 2014 the 4 year curriculum was taught for 6 subjects: Burmese, Thai, English, Science, Maths and Social Studies. A special Health Programme was taught in years 3 and 4 about relationships and HIV AIDS awareness.

In 2014 graduates from the Secondary Education Programme found successful employment including translators in medical clinics, a Mobile Phone Company, and Learning Centre Teachers.

Volunteers from Italy and Australia have played a significant role in supporting students in English, Science and Social Studies.

A significant sign of success of the secondary programme is the retention rates of students from Year 3 to Year 4 (final year). In 2015 we estimate a 100% retention rate. In 2015 80% of Year 4 students have joined the 5 month Academic English Preparation (Bridging) Programme to prepare for the University Online Diploma Entrance Exam.

*"If I have to pay any more money I'm afraid I'll just have to send the girls back to Myanmar"*

Parent speaking at an education meeting

# UNIVERSITY

Preschool Programme | Secondary Education Programme | University Online Diploma

## University Online Diploma Programme



Marist Asia Foundation partners with Australian Catholic University (ACU) in the Thai / Burma Border Programme providing a Diploma course for future leaders.

Entrance to the programme requires students to be a Burmese Migrant living and working in Ranong, show a proficiency in English, a commitment to the programme lasting 12-15 months and a willingness to use their skills in order to help their own community.

In January 2014 the 3rd group of University Online Diploma Students began their studies to complete Management, International Development, Human Rights and International Law, Photography, Global Health Problems, Global Environment Change, Teaching Skills courses.

The ACU Thai Burma Border Programme has received international recognition by the UNHCR and its Innovative Education Unit, and was recently involved in a workshop at the Geneva University exploring Open Educational Resources (OER's) for Tertiary Education in Fragile Contexts.

In May 2015 27 graduates will have completed University Online Diploma Studies.



### 'I am now ready'

Education is not just subjects, languages, knowledge and facts. It is all about being mature, gaining skills, improving critical thinking, and being open-minded. I am a Burmese migrant. I have been living in Ranong, Thailand for more than five years. One of my best learning experiences is studying at Australian Catholic University. My life has been changed by this experience. We have improved academic writing and reading skills from Academic English Course. International Development Course helps us to think about real development and how to create it. We have learnt important management skills. Human Rights opened our minds to learn and express what is happening around the world. Global Health and Environmental Change opened our minds to see the world and showed us what happened in the past and in the present about health and the environment. Teaching Skills really improved my teaching in terms of managing students and understanding them. I am now ready to share all of this with my community!

Zay Yar Nay Win (19)

Students benefit from the online and 'in person' lectures with 4 of the 8 courses beginning with an intensive week from the lecturers.

In May 2014 as part of our partnership with ACU 5 International Development Students were hosted on an Immersion Programme to explore first hand the reality of Refugees and Migrants on the Thai Burma Border. The exposure to and relationships with our students was extremely beneficial and we hope for this Immersion Programme to continue

The number of students applying for the University Online Diploma Programme continues to exceed the number of places available. 20 students recently sat an entrance test to join the Academic English Preparation Programme to sit the Ranong ACU entrance exam.

**2014-15** Graduates have recently found employment as Teachers, Translators, Managers of NGO's, working in the hospitality industry and some are researching scholarship opportunities to continue further studies.

Marist Asia Foundation is proud to be a partner with the Australian Catholic University and its creative engagement with meeting the higher education needs of Refugees, Migrants and Asylum Seekers. Leaders in these vulnerable communities are especially needed today.

The witness of confident and competent young leaders has inspired many parents to believe in a higher education, and students to remain at school aiming to enter the University Online Programme.

*"I am no longer narrow minded as I now know what is going on around the world"*



# HEALTH PROGRAMME

## HIV AIDS COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMME

### HIV AIDS

There is a high rate of HIV AIDS on the Thailand Burma border crossing town of Ranong, Thailand. The HIV Aids Health Project serves over 80 HIV AIDS patients who are most in need.

### Community Support

The Health Programme is community based, involving visits to homes and encouraging families and friends into monthly education and support 'self help' meetings . These gatherings help break down isolation and build independence and resiliency.

### Translation Services

The Marist Health Team provides translators each Tuesday for Hospital appointments for Burmese Migrants to ensure effective communication between Thai Doctors and nurses and Burmese Migrants.



*daily visiting of patients builds relationships*

### The Marist Asia

Health Programme supports Burmese Migrants with HIV AIDS and their families and care-givers who live in Ranong. In 2014 the HIV AIDS Programme

- Had 71 patients, 12 new patients and 2 patients passed away.
- Provided 1,428 patient home visits with monthly personal contact, distribution of some basic food items of rice and nutrition, personal care and counselling, and individualised medication explanation.
- Provided 588 Hospital visits for patients in need of transport or special care and attention while in Hospital.
- Provided 1896 translation appointments at the Ranong Public Hospital for Tuberculosis (TB) and HIV AIDS Patients



## From slavery to support

Pye Sone (not his real name) is 38 years old. When he was 9 he became a victim of human trafficking from Myanmar to Thailand. He was sold in the North of Thailand as a labourer. As a teenager he ran away and supported himself until he got married. He came to Ranong.

In 2012 he became sick and found he was HIV positive. He was very depressed. He hid his HIV status from his wife. Feeling ashamed he drank poison and was hospitalised.

He approached the Marist Health Team wanting counselling and support. After visiting and education he got the courage to reveal his status to his wife. His wife got tested and was found to be positive.

During treatment he experienced terrible side effects and pain. He could not work and support his family. He was so afraid his wife and children might leave him. He attempted suicide again trying to electrocute himself.

Pye Sone and his wife found the monthly self help support group encouraged them to accept and love each other. Both of them are now working receiving a salary and supporting themselves and their family.

ensuring medical advice is understood and effective assistance is provided between Thai medical staff and Burmese patients.

Provided education to 43 senior students around HIV Awareness and discrimination.

Created 'Burmese health education flip charts' for our health workers to educate patients when visiting homes.

Provided 8 self help workshops where patients found spiritual and emotional support, listened to personal testimonies, and received education about AIDS education, ARV side effects, Medicines, Transmission, Pregnancy, Legal Rights, Hospital Processes

All of our HIV + patients have informed their intimate partners of their status and encouraged their partners to get tested.

All of our HIV + pregnant mothers received Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) and assistance with infant formula to prevent mother to child transmission.

A successful sign of patients self management and proper medication is the reduction of AIDS related deaths from 13 (2013) to 2 (2014).

A successful sign of 'self help' meetings is the frequent feedback of how patients feel encouraged by the examples of others, knowledgeable about their condition and no longer living 'alone'.

Strengthened partnership with Ranong Public Hospital with referrals being made to us for new patients needing emotional and physical support.



*many HIV/AIDS patients live in extremely poor conditions*

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# MIGRANT SUPPORT

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Community Centre Library | Migrant Education Classes | Future Leaders



There are an estimated 100,000-140,000 Burmese Migrants living in and around Ranong. It is one of the largest Burmese Migrant populations in Thailand as many Burmese Parents and children seek work in the fish factories and plantations on the southern most border crossing town of Burma on the Thailand / Burma Border.

Poor living conditions, difficult work environments, low wages, discrimination and harassment are a daily part of the struggle as a migrant worker.

The Burmese Migrant Support Programme aims to

- Form positive relationships with local Burmese in order to best meet their needs
- Encourage Burmese to engage with their culture by providing a Burmese library service



## **"I want their life to be more beautiful"**

My story is being a general migrant worker in Ranong. I heard about courses at the Marist Centre to help migrants. I started to learn computers while I was doing jobs like painting, cooking, repairing motors.

One day I said to my friend "I want to learn English?" My friend gave me a lesson. One day as I was trying read english outside the Computer room a teacher asked me: "Do you want to learn English?" I was so happy. But when I was in class my friends laughed at me and my teacher did not understand what I was talking about.

When I came to the Marist Centre in the late afternoon I saw children running around and playing loudly. They looked very dirty and I knew they did not have education. They never attended a school. I decided to help them and taught them Burmese. They were so poor and did not have books, pencils and eraser. I bought some and snacks for them. They were so happy. I thought it was beautiful. When I looked at them I thought if I can make money I encourage their life to be more beautiful. I am not studying University Online and want to be a business man.

- Educate adult Burmese with skills that will help them integrate into the local Thai community and find employment.

In 2014 our Migrant Support Programme continued to focus on 3 Programmes to respond to the needs of Burmese Migrant Workers.

### **Community Centre / Library**

The new Marist Centre while it has the facility of a library also has playground area and is recognised in the local area as a safe place for children and young adults to play sport.

In 2014 a number of local Community Based Organisations have sought to assist Burmese with books in their own language and as a consequence while the community library is helpful to students and migrants the numbers have decreased to a level we are reconsidering the use of this community space to meet new needs.

### **English / Thai & Computer Classes**

English and Computer classes are still courses that the Migrant Community have identified as the most helpful education programmes they can use to grow their confidence and ability to find work.

Adult Migrant Workers attending education classes have remained steady. Volunteers from Italy have assisted in providing English classes for a number of workers who wish to gain employment or seek entrance to the ACU Online Diploma Course.

While constant, the low numbers of Adult Migrant Workers attending computer classes has caused us to investigate if this is a continued need.

### **Strategic Direction**

Our strategic planning process has identified the Pre-School, Secondary and University Online Programme as key education programmes. To develop these and allow for greater numbers we are considering using the library as a new classroom for more secondary education students. We are now entering a consultation phase with the Burmese Migrant Community to consider how we can support their education programmes in Thai, English and Computer studies.

# Directors Report

## may we never abandon them

2014 has been a year of great blessings for our organisation and the people we are serving.

On 30<sup>th</sup> May the Thailand government approved Marist Mission Ranong as a Charitable Foundation called 'Marist Asia Foundation'. It has been arduous and long journey to be a Foundation.

This great progress shows that the Thai government at local and national levels recognises the work we are doing among the Burmese Migrant community in Ranong.

I am very moved of the generosity and courage of our international volunteers and lay Marist's from Philippines, Italy, Australia and New Zealand. They make a daily and significant contribution to educating our students, caring for patients with HIV-AIDS and assisting the Burmese migrant community.

Our patients with HIV-AIDS continue to suffer from the disease, discrimination, isolation and great poverty. We saw a glimpse of hope when the Thailand authorities reached out to Burmese migrant workers to get or renew their documentations as migrant workers. Only those migrants with proper documentation will get 'free health care'. Many of our patients benefit from this programme.

It is very encouraging to see the enthusiasm of many Burmese migrant children and youth to pursue education despite their family poverty and social challenges. Nine Burmese students are studying University Online Diploma programme from Australian Catholic University. Marist Asia Foundation is proud to support these students to achieve their goal and dream of a higher education and service to their community.

Despite some positive changes in Myanmar there is continued concern of the lack of progress toward democracy and there is no evidence on the ground of migrants returning. We frequently hear comments: 'although its difficult here, its still worse back home'. So we know there is continued need.

International funds are being directed toward Myanmar with the result that supportive organisations and NGO's: Jesuit Refugee Services (Education), World Vision (Health), International Labour Organisation (ILO - Migrants / Human Trafficking), Volunteer Services Overseas (VSO) (Education), Camillians (Health) and DISAC Legal Services (Human Rights) are all departing from Ranong. This presents great challenges for us and the migrant community.

I am very grateful to each of you, our donors, supporters and funding partners, for the prayers and financial support you share with us for the vulnerable people we serve. I hope you continue your support with us.

Fr Kevin Medilo sm. Director. [kevin26sm@gmail.com](mailto:kevin26sm@gmail.com) +66 843772574



"We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them."

Pope Francis  
*Evangelii Gaudium* 48

# FINANCE

## Summary of the 2014 financial figures

### Thanks

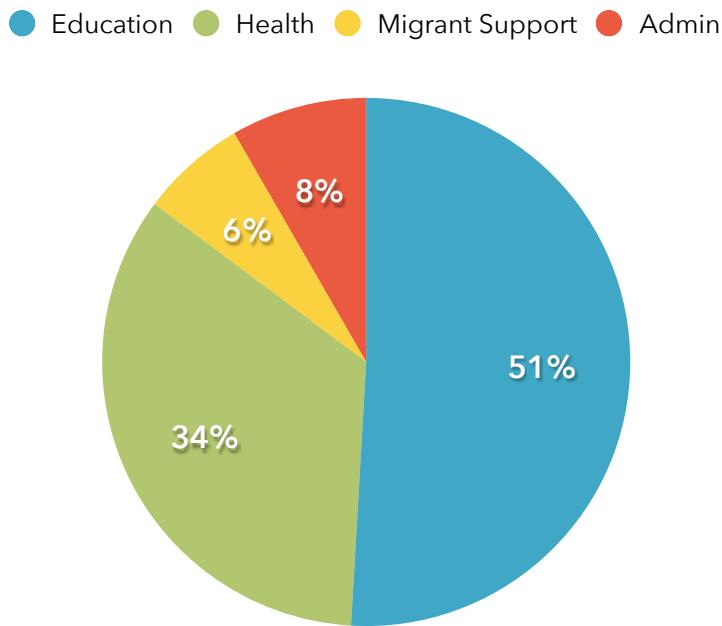
A special thanks to our funding partners: Marist Mission Centre Australia, Misean Cara (Health Programme), Caritas Verona (Preschool Programme) Misean Cara (Secondary Programme), and generous schools and supporters for various programme needs. We are extremely grateful and seek to utilise funding to its maximum benefit for the children and families of Burmese Migrants.

### Sustainability

In 2014 we identified some future partnerships, established a Charitable Status in New Zealand to support the friends and supporters network and completed the online donation system. A future income generation project of a 'Learning Centre' is under investigation.

### Funding Challenges

Many NGO's are experiencing the stress of funding shifts from the Thai Burma Border. Marist Asia Foundation seeks new co-partners for its Education and Health projects



### Marist Mission Ranong Programmes 2014

Education Programmes	THB 2,037,863	Euro 51,189
Health Programme	THB 1,372,667	Euro 34,480
Migrant Support Programme	THB 258,739	Euro 6,499
Administration	THB 333,218.00	Euro 8,370
<b>Total</b>	<b>THB 4,002,487</b>	<b>Euro 100,539</b>

# SUPPORTERS

visit [www.maristasiafoundation.org](http://www.maristasiafoundation.org) and [www.facebook.com/maristasiafoundation](https://www.facebook.com/maristasiafoundation)

## Opportunities

We welcome opportunities for Parish & School Partners, Teacher Volunteering, Class interaction, Immersion Experiences, and Sponsorship

## Become a Friend

We love the people we serve and the work we do here on the Thailand / Burma Border. Become a friend at [www.maristasiafoundation.org](http://www.maristasiafoundation.org) and receive a monthly photo and story about the project.

## “Small change, big difference”

As part of sustainability planning we have identified the most effective way we can support children is to identify 200 friends to support 200 students. 70 cents a day, \$22 a month, \$240 a year will help a child get to school and have books to learn. Check out [www.maristasiafoundation.org](http://www.maristasiafoundation.org) /donate for the offer

## Become a Donor

We continue to search for donor partners. Contact Fr Frank Bird, Fundraising Co-ordinator for details.  
[francisbird@gmail.com](mailto:francisbird@gmail.com)



In 2014 we continued to benefit from the involvement of so many Friends, Supporters and Partners.

We wish to express our continued thanks to: Marist Mission Centre (Australia), Caritas Italiana (Italy), Caritas Verona (Italy), Caritas Ambrosiana (Italy) Misean Cara (Ireland), Greg Larsen Fund at the Australian Community Foundation, Surat Thani Thai Catholic Foundation, Caritas New Zealand. Cullinane College Wanganui - “Cullinane Benefit Concert”. Marist Girls College Auckland - Annual Fundraise. St Joseph’s Primary School Hawera. Marist College Atlanta (USA). Irish Students visiting - English Language Camp. Volunteer Services Overseas (VSO) - Teacher Mentoring. Australian Catholic University (ACU) - University Online Diploma Programme. Singapore friends - Building Project & Health Project Support. Fr Jimmy McElroy (Ireland) and Donors to the givealittle.co.nz/org/maristmissionranong site. Donors to the ‘small change, big difference’ 200 friends campaign. International Volunteers from: Australia, Italy and New Zealand.

Thanks for your support

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