



Volunteer Profile

VOLUNTEER ALEXANDRA KIRBY SHARES HER EXPERIENCE IN TIMOR-LESTE

This past March Sophie Marden and myself were volunteers for the Order's work in Timor-Leste.

Placed with the Canossian Daughters of Charity, we immersed ourselves in the generous hospitality of the sisters, experiencing the vulnerability of the local community, the daily undertakings of the 90 girls under the immediate care of the sisters at the Balide boarding house as well as the enormously vast and varied work that these inspiring nuns assume in service to their community, country and religion.

Madre Guilhermina, a tough woman whose day can entail anything from lecturing at the university, to a meeting with presidents and ambassadors, heads the Balide community, a vibrant young community whose comfort with us was evidenced by their endless joy taken in introducing us as their Australian Aspirants. This small world is characterised by a rigorous schedule of work, daily prayer and study which in however limited a capacity, we were able to assist with. We were whole heartedly embraced as family,

witnessing the irreverence and good humour of young nuns, from some declaring "Jesus is my boyfriend", to them allowing us to cook pizza and pasta for them. We were welcomed in prayer, celebrating St Joseph's day with all the Canossian communities, in play; singing, playing basketball and having a "Tasi Party" (Beach Party) with the sisters and in solidarity, where we witnessed the immense work embarked on by the sisters in the areas of healthcare, education and assistance for women all over the country. Not a day went past without a line of people coming to the sisters in search of food or clothing.

We are in awe of the sisters, in particular the work they assume while venturing into the community at large. It is a humbling experience to be welcomed into the homes of strangers with a warmth and openness characteristic of the Timorese and witness the immense comfort that the presence of these women generate.

This was a unique opportunity to witness the development of a young country from such a grass roots positioning and connect with exceptional individuals whose joy and hunger for life serve as an overwhelming inspiration. We thank David Scarf and Anthony Heath for this singular opportunity.

If you are interested in volunteering opportunities with the Order, please email us at volunteers@smom.org.au



8 MONTHS ON AND THE REHABILITATION EFFORTS CONTINUE IN QLD

At the turn of the year significant flooding in Queensland resulted in three quarters of the state being declared a disaster zone. In February, the state was dealt a further blow as Cyclone Yasi crossed the Queensland coast. Amidst such devastation, the Order of Malta was quick to respond, providing assistance to those affected.

The Order's relief effort included the assembly and distribution of emergency 'care packages' and pastoral support to those in dire straits. A nationwide appeal to Order members resulted in over \$80,000 being raised for rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts and was directed to areas where there

was no support from State or Federal Government or other charitable agencies.

The Parish of Silkwood, was one beneficiary of the Order's fundraising. The church at Silkwood sustained significant damage, with the cyclone

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demolishing the roof and leaving water damage to the lights, fans, altar and organ, as well as displacing two Stations of the Cross – smashing them beyond repair. Thanks to funds contributed by the Order, the church has been able to take delivery of a new organ and replace the Stations of the Cross which would not have been covered in the insurance reparation payment.

"We are determined to face whatever it takes to regain a sense of our space again" says Fr Karel from the parish of Silkwood. **"As a community, we continue to pray for those, like you, who have helped us along the way. Sincere thanks. Your goodwill, your generous efforts and your prayer all make a difference in our world – that is the Christian faith at work."**

ORDER OF MALTA AROUND THE WORLD

HUNGER RELIEF IN EAST AFRICA: HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES STRUGGLE TO COPE

In July reports of a major food crisis in the horn of Africa started to come to light, where twelve million people are at risk of starvation following the region's worst drought in several decades.

In response to the emergency, the international relief agency of the Order of Malta, Malteser International, made \$250,000 of its own funds immediately available for the purchase and distribution of rice, beans and oil to the population in the Marsabit district, in north-eastern Kenya. Ute Kirch, emergency relief coordinator for the Order of Malta's international relief service, Malteser International, explains "People here live traditionally on livestock, but pastures have dried up, the cattle are dying, and there's no

more food – they have used up all their reserves'.

As a result of the severe drought, the health care units in the region have seen a drastic increase in cases of diarrhoea, bacterial infections, skin and respiratory diseases. For that reason, Malteser International have supplied Marsabit's health care units – 80% of which are run by the local diocese – with the necessary drugs and medical supplies to treat a total of 7,300 patients suffering from these conditions. In addition, 1,200 pregnant women have received iron, folic acid, and nutritional supplements, while 3,000 children have been supplied with vitamin A and deworming medicines. In total, the Orders relief efforts to date have provided help for more than 24,000 people.

However, despite aid from the Order and agencies from around the world, the influx of Somali refugees into Ethiopia and Kenya means that Humanitarian organisations are struggling to cope. Malnutrition and mortality rates are alarmingly high.



In Marsabit, one in every three children is severely malnourished.

HOW TO HELP

Every donation, however modest, is most gratefully received. It will mean the Order of Malta can continue to give support to those who are suffering, to prevent them dying of starvation. If you would like to donate, please refer to page 5 for more information.

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SEPTEMBER 2011 NEWSLETTER

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ORDER OF MALTA AUSTRALIA



For those of you I have not met, my name is Ian Marshall and in addition to being a Member of the Order, I am also the Australian Association's Hospitaller. In this role I supervise the Order's charitable works and over the last few months I have been delighted to see a number of our projects come to fruition. This newsletter aims to share these with you.

Our 'Coats for the Homeless' programme is a national project which was made possible by the generosity of Members and friends of the Order. We have also included information on the Order's International relief efforts in East Africa following the severe drought and famine.

In addition to our fundraising activities, there is also a report from one of our members who recently volunteered for the Order's work in Timor-Leste. The Australian Association has been providing humanitarian support to the Timorese since 2002 and in this edition we have detailed our upcoming projects there.

I hope you enjoy this issue. Thank you for your continued support.

Ian Marshall
Dr Ian Marshall AE



Conor Finn (pictured), Dean of Identity at St. Joseph's College, Gregory Terrace was provided with 220 coats to distribute in Brisbane.

COATS FOR THE HOMELESS PROJECT RECEIVES OVERWHELMING SUPPORT

WHILE Australia experienced record-breaking low temperatures this winter, the Order of Malta's 'Coats for the Homeless' project has distributed its custom made coats to the nations homeless population who are unable to find shelter.

'The response to appeal has been fantastic' said Order of Malta Fundraising Manager, Michelle Rees. "Not only have we received a number of generous donations from members of the Order, corporate sponsors and the Catholic community, but we have been overwhelmed by the number of letters we have received in support of the project."

One great-grandmother, grateful that each of her 20 great-grandchildren had a warm bed to sleep in every night, donated \$1,000 after reading the Catholic Weekly article on the project. Another donor, who had her holiday cancelled, donated her returned deposit to support the appeal. The Master Builders Foundation Queensland also generously provided funding for 1,200 coats for distribution. The list of inspiring stories could go on.

\$50 will buy a warm, showerproof coat for a person without a home.

Bernard Cronin from Baptist Community Service LifeCare Division was provided with 40 coats to distribute in Newcastle. He reports "Our Staff who attend to the homeless are so pleased to have at their disposal such warm clothing to distribute

that they report back regularly to us here at Head Office the gratefulness of those who receive the coats."

EVERY DAY IN AUSTRALIA:

- * 100,000 people experience homelessness
- * Almost 20,000 people sleep rough on the streets of our towns and cities
- * Half of the people who seek shelter in emergency accommodation are turned away

While greater awareness of the 'Coats for the Homeless' project has increased donations, it has also increased the demand for the Coats. In addition to letters of support, we have also been contacted by individuals and organisations wanting coats for people sleeping rough in their communities. Consequently fundraising efforts will continue year round so that the Order is in a position to distribute further coats next winter.

"We cannot thank enough the people who have supported this appeal" adds Michelle. "Every coat we distribute provides much needed protection to those exposed to the cold and wet".

If you would like to donate to this ongoing project, please refer to page 5 for more information or visit www.coatsforthehomeless.org to donate online.



HELP US PROVIDE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO AUSTRALIA'S CLOSEST NEIGHBOUR

Timor-Leste (East Timor) is Australia's closest neighbor lying less than 600 km off the north - west coast of Australia. However it is also one of the poorest countries in the world, with basic income, health, and literacy levels similar to those of countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Both infrastructure and resources are lacking in urban and rural areas. Unemployment and underemployment combined are estimated to be as high as 70%. Half of the country's population lives below the poverty line. It is for these reasons that the Australian Association of the Order of Malta has chosen Timor-Leste as the focus of its international humanitarian projects.

TIMOR-LESTE	
Life expectancy	58
Total fertility rate	7
% births attended by health staff	32
Maternal mortality ratio*	7 (1 in Australia)
Infant mortality rate*	98 (4 in Australia)
Deaths under 5 years (% of total deaths)	36

Since its independence in 2002, the Order has been providing humanitarian support to the people of Timor-Leste by way of a number of projects/programs including:

- * Providing large quantities of medicines, consumables and children's clothing to mission clinics spread throughout the country, with the particular support of the South Australian Branch of the Order;
- * Funding the construction of a tuberculosis clinic for the Salesian Sisters at Venilale;
- * Supporting both teachers and students at the Teachers College in Baucau, the country's second largest city, and at the Salesian Agricultural College at Fuloro;



providing basic amenities at an orphanage and funding a medical clinic.

AMBULANCE REHABILITATION

The Timor-Leste Ambulance Service is badly under-resourced. Most of its vehicles are inoperable. Whilst we are arranging to send up mechanics to repair as many of the old ambulances as possible they still need more vehicles. In Timor-Leste there is approximately one ambulance per 50,000 head of population. In Australia that ratio is about one per 18,000.



A second hand ambulance costs around \$35,000.

REPLACING BASIC AMENITIES AT ORPHANAGE

Timor-Leste has a high number of orphans and no state welfare system to care for them. This is a result of high fertility rates (around 7 per mother), very high mortality rates of the mother in childbirth and basic poverty which prevents the family from supporting extra children. The orphanages are usually provided and run by the various religious congregations. In the town of Maubara, 40km west of Dili is an orphanage run by the Carmelite Sisters.

To build a new kitchen, laundry and toilet block for the sisters and the children will cost \$39,000.

The orphanage has 34 children between the ages of 8 and about 15; thirty girls and four boys. Not all of the children are technically orphans. Many of the children have lost their mothers in the childbirth of a sibling and the surviving fathers were not able to care for them. There are also children, who have one or two parents, but cannot stay at their homes because of the conditions of violence and sexual assault. Some of the stories of the children's home life were horrific.

LOURDES 2011

Every May over 7,000 members, volunteers, pilgrims and malades take the often arduous journey to Lourdes, France, to bring their prayers, troubles and hopes to Mary the Immaculate Conception, drink from and bathe in her healing water and enjoy a week of care, fun and friendship. This year, for the first time as a proper delegation, 47 participants from all around Australia took part in this amazing experience. If you would like to get involved in this unique pilgrimage, or know someone who would, please contact lourdes@smom.org.au



The children at the orphanage are healthy, happy and receiving schooling – a blessing in a country where illiteracy and poverty affect almost half of the population. However the kitchen, laundry and bathrooms at the orphanage are in a terrible state. At present there are only two showers (where you stand in a room and pour cold water over yourself with a bucket) and two toilets for the 34 children and 5 sisters.

MEDICAL CLINIC FUNDING

In the town of Maubara there is a medical clinic run by the Carmelite Sisters. This is the only general clinic in an area serving a population of about 650 people. The clinic is quite modern, well constructed and has good facilities, including a dental surgery. There is also basic accommodation available for a visiting (volunteer) doctor or dentist.

However being a private clinic it is not being funded by the government. The Australian Association of the Order of Malta would like to fund the operation of this clinic for a minimum of three years until government funding could be secured. By doing so it would be able to provide good quality medical care at no cost to the people of Maubara and the surrounding region.

All donations, no matter what size, will be gratefully received. Please help if you can. If you would like to contribute towards the Order's humanitarian projects in Timor-Leste, please refer to page 5 for more information.

Funding the medical clinic would be \$25,000 per year, for three years.



AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION PARTICIPATE IN THE ORDER OF MALTA INTERNATIONAL SUMMER CAMP IN ITALY

500 young people – half of them disabled – came from 23 countries to participate in the 28th Order of Malta International Summer Camp from 23rd to 30th July. Thanks to the Young Order of Malta's (YOOM) participation in fundraising and co-ordination an Australian delegation of 8 participants and their volunteer carers, attended this year's camp.

At Lignano Sabbiadoro, north-east Italy, in a tumult of languages and colours, participants enjoyed a week of sporting events, cultural visits and spiritual renewal. The swimming activities alternated with excursions to historic cities such as Venice, Padua and Aquileia, entertainments and prayer. All this was made possible by the commitment of the over 100 Order of Malta Italian volunteers who organised and managed the camp.

When visiting the camp, the Order of Malta's Grand Master Fra' Matthew Festing wanted to meet and show his appreciation to the volunteers "my thanks to you all for the great work you have carried out: what I have seen is simply fantastic".

On 27th July, in the presence of all the participants, Cardinal Paolo Sardi, Patron of the Order, celebrated mass in the Basilica of St. Anthony in Padua together with the Order's chaplains present in the camp.

The international summer camps for the disabled organised over the past 27 years, provide an excellent opportunity for participants as well as a unique social service experience.



THE ORDER OF MALTA AROUND AUSTRALIA

SOUTH AUSTRALIA CONTINUES TO PROVIDE HEALTH SERVICE TO TIMOR-LESTE

In South Australia the Branch continues to support the work of four religious congregations providing health services in Timor-Leste. Recently, four clinics with whom the branch have long established relationships with, received parcels of medicines and surgical products, a motorised wheelchair for a severely disabled young man and several parcels of baby's clothing and linen sewn by inmates at the Adelaide Women's Prison.

In September the SA branch will welcome the third delegation this year of visitors from Timor-Leste who seek to develop professional networks among health workers in Adelaide.

NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH HOSTS THE ORDER'S BIENNIAL NATIONAL ASSEMBLY and Investiture of 39 new members in Sydney. The Branch was also heavily involved in organising the Australian Association's first group pilgrimage to Lourdes, where members, volunteers, the sick and disabled from around the world come together each year to seek comfort and alleviation in Our Lady.

Upcoming events include:

- * Gorman House Fundraising Function at St Vincent's 27th Sept
- * White Knights Cocktail 11th Nov: a 1940ies-themed social event with all proceeds going towards Gorman House Drug & Alcohol Detox Unit
- * Lourdes Day Mass 3rd Dec: an uplifting Solemn Mass celebrated by H.E. Cardinal Pell AC with a blessing of the sick and distribution of healing Lourdes water

* First Friday Vigils: every 1st Thursday of the month the Order celebrates mass at the Cathedral

IN VICTORIA THE ORDER HAS COMMITTED BOTH FUNDING AND VOLUNTEERS TO 3 NEW PROJECTS:

- * A home for asylum seekers in the Forest Hills Parish. Catholic Care will direct the project and the Order of Malta and the Gill Foundation will provide a year's rent and volunteer support;
- * A two year project in Timor-Leste to assist disabled children to get to school. Confrere Anthony Heath, who has a long familiarity with Timor-Leste, has negotiated the scheme with ASSERT, an experienced local organization;
- * A long term agreement between the St. Vincent's Caritas Hospice Day Care Centre, the Order of Malta and the Italian Community organisation. Thirty infirm and frail elderly will be brought in taxis from their homes to the Caritas Day Care Centre and provided with a range of services and lunch. There will frequently be a Mass celebrated for them in Italian by our Magistral Chaplain Fr. Gerald O'Collins SJ. The Order has agreed to meet half the costs of taxis (\$20,000) and provide volunteers on two days. There will also be an Order of Malta fund for special projects.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA RAISES MONEY FOR LOCAL PROJECTS AND A CLINIC IN VIETNAM

The Order was able to combine with the Catholic Doctors Association of WA to raise \$12,500 to help with the building of the Mai Khoi Clinic for those suffering from HIV/AIDS in Ho Chi Minh City Vietnam. The clinic has now been opened, blessed, and is operating successfully.

In WA, the Order supports the Personal Advocacy Service, which provides support for people with disabilities through a volunteer program. The service has many groups across the Perth metropolitan area and Rockingham and is looking to major fund raising and expansion during 2011.

QUEENSLAND BRANCH CONTINUES TO COMPLEMENT ITS HOSPITALIER ACTIVITIES WITH REGULAR SPIRITUAL EVENTS

Thanks to the generous support of the Queensland Master Builders' Foundation and financial contributions by numerous corporate sponsors and individual members, the Queensland Branch has more than 1200 of the specially-designed coats for distribution.

A network has been established where members work with "Eddy's Van" (a homeless support initiative of St Joseph's College, Gregory Terrace), Catholic Psychiatric Pastoral Care, and volunteers from the Queensland Master Builders' Association to ensure that the coats are given directly to those in immediate need.

In May, the Queensland Branch hosted its annual "Lourdes Healing Mass" at Our Lady Help of Christians Church, Hendra. More than 250 of "Our Lords the Poor and Sick" joined members of the Order to celebrate the Eucharist and to receive gifts of Lourdes water. The numbers attending this Mass continue to grow, and planning is already underway for next year's Mass.

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Members in WA continue to support the education of Notre Dame medical students in Philosophy and Ethics by offering prizes each year for these subjects.

I WANT TO HELP

You can make a donation by completing this donation form and returning it in the **Reply Paid envelope provided.**

☐ I am happy for the Order to allocate my donation to where the need is greatest; **or**

Please accept a gift towards the:

- ☐ Coats for the Homeless programme
- ☐ Hunger relief efforts in East Africa
- ☐ Timor-Leste Humanitarian projects

REMEMBER, GIFTS OF \$2 AND OVER ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

Name

Address

State Postcode Telephone

Please find enclosed a Cheque/ Money Order (payable to 'The Order of Malta') for \$ or;

Please debit my credit card the amount of \$

Frequency ☐ Once only ☐ Monthly Card Type ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Credit Card Number

Expiry Date Cardholder name

Signature