

MISSION UNEXPECTED

Coming all the way from France to a small town in Indonesia to help underprivileged boys three years ago, Harold reflects about 3 main things he learned through mission.

Text and Photos by:
Harold de Boysson

I have been a friend of iCare and CHARIS for three years now, and it all started with the thought “why not do some volunteer work?” The ways that God has for us can be really funny – as an impatient man who only went to the countryside on holidays, I applied at the Mission Etrangeres de Paris, and they decided to send me from France all the way to an unknown town in Indonesia to help in a household of 40 underprivileged boys (11 to 18 years old).

With that I spent one year on mission in Tanjung Pinang, and as I was vain enough to think that I was going to give and receive not so much, as most of you would imagine, I was wrong! Reflecting back, I remember three main things that for me, defined a mission.

Firstly, I initially thought my main role was to ‘help’ - to be a ‘big brother’ for



The boys with the local priest, home director, and Harold in front of the household in Tanjung Pinang.

the boys, take care of the household, help the boys with schoolwork, wake up at 2am when they were sick, go to the market, and in general just trying to make everything work. When we leave for mission, we initially bring along many dreams and ideals to be a ‘saviour’ who brings ‘change’ to the place we serve in. However, I realized that it was more of adapting to the language, culture and daily tasks – where changes were very much pushed back!

Secondly, I realized that mission was more linked to my faith that expected. I was never a regular church-goer, and only went to Church when I needed to go with my grandmothers or during big celebrations. Sometime into the year, I realised that these boys had much more faith than me, and that faith was allowing me to “survive”. The morning masses were a reboot for my spirit, giving me the “extra step” for my day. This boost helped me to fulfil whatever changes I wanted to create and helped me realise that young children should be encour-

aged to do their best for them to progress. It is He who helped us to recognise that “poor” people should not have a “poor” place, and this led to changes in nutrition and hygiene, creating a better environment for all.

Thirdly, I will never forget the many unexpected surprises during this mission. I will always remember the day we put some cheap plastic carpet in the boys’ bedrooms over hard concrete floors. Then, for the first time, I got yelled at by the boys, after I entered their room with my flip-flops. Sometimes a little thing like adding a carpet can change attitudes drastically – we didn’t need to force them to clean up once they considered the rooms as “their place”.

It has been three years, but I am still connected with the boys and started my own association “Cahaya Masa Depan” to support and fund education costs for the boys after high school. These missions helped me to realise who I am, and to always bring joy. Thank you iCare and CHARIS for giving me the opportunity to go on missions, to help, develop my faith, and to get surprised!

Caritas Humanitarian Aid & Relief Initiatives Singapore (CHARIS)

is the Catholic Church's umbrella body for overseas humanitarian aid.



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AFFILIATE ACTIVITIES



Mission Trip to Kg. Bongol, Tampruli, Sabah

Affiliate: Clare's Missionary
Date: 26 to 31 October 2018
Tentative Budget: \$200 (excl. airfare)
Programme: English Lessons with students, farming experience

Contact claresmissionary@gmail.com for more information!



TeachNLearn Education Mission in Rempang, Tg Pinang and Taroka, Indonesia

Affiliate: Epiphany Parish Mission Group
Date: Various dates in Jul - Nov 2018
Programme: Teaching English to primary school students

Contact riatn1@gmail or visit the CHARIS Website for more information!

CHARIS connect

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COMPASSION • CAPACITY • CONNECTION • CATALYST

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TO LOVE IN SOLIDARITY

A group of CHARIS volunteers went on a Mission Trip in Cebu and constructed bio-sand water filters in two villages affected by Typhoon Haiyan.

Written by Joshua Chan, photos by Antaeus Lim and Agnes Yap



The volunteers with the completed bio-sand filter in Tacup

Mission Friendship took place from 12 to 18 May 2018, in Cebu, Philippines with seven volunteers and one full-time CHARIS staff. Our mission was to two villages built and maintained by Caritas Philippines in the wake of the catastrophic damage caused by Typhoon Haiyan: Hagnaya and Tacup in the northern part of Cebu.

The mission involved assisting the Cebuan Archdiocesan Relief and Rehabilitation Unit's staff to construct two water tanks, in partnership with the villagers. Our goal was to use simple materials, preferably all sourced from within the local area, and largely using local manpower, to construct a safe source of potable water, using a biosand water filter. The process involves getting a large water tank, cleaning sand and gravel of varying sizes and filling the tank up with them, and letting the sand and gravel act as a filter to trap harmful bacteria. The tank can be easily self-maintained by the villagers, and will act as a safe source of water in the event of a future natural disaster.

The mission involved a lot of manual labour, but despite being physically rather unfit, I found it meaningful and fruitful to work together with other brothers and sisters across borders to build a project of love together. This was my first mission trip. On my previous CIP trip to Laos, I felt it was missing the faith aspect and it couldn't answer

the question of “why am I going overseas to do something with others?” or “am I just being a voluntourist and arrogantly assuming that these people overseas need my help?” I signed up on this trip to seek an answer. Through a series of unexpected events, I was appointed the Faith Formation I/C for the Mission and was in charge of leading a short session on the Catholic social teaching daily, prayerful reflection, and some sharing. These really edified me as I got to see our Church's teachings, our faith, in action.

It is not about going overseas to help people we take pity on; rather, our Church teaches that everyone is equal in dignity, whether rich or poor, and that we associate and show love to each other in solidarity, regardless of borders, to help communities and people become empowered to be self-sufficient. Not only were the answers provided to me as I got to live out the Church's teachings out; I too experienced much love from the villagers as we did the hard work together, and they generously offered us drinks and snacks, jokes, and taught us lots of Cebuano words to learn! God's love was incarnate in the locals as they showered us with so much affection.

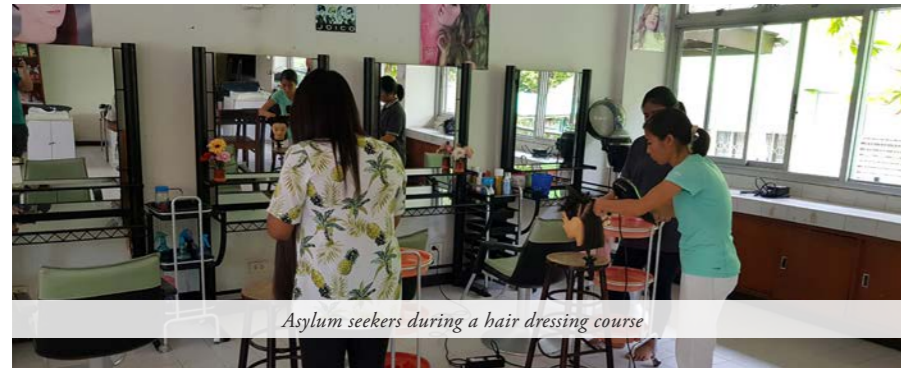
Rather than a mission of humanitarian aid, it felt more like a mission of mutual love and coming together to create in love, just as God created us in love.



REBUILDING COMMUNITIES

CHARIS visited the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Urban Education Program school in Bangkok, Thailand.

Written by: Antaeus Lim
Photo Credits: Antaeus Lim



Asylum seekers during a hair dressing course

On the 14th of June 2018, CHARIS visited the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) Urban Education School which was being housed with the Sisters of Good Shepherd in Bangkok.

JRS Bangkok helps asylum seekers seeking refuge in Thailand by equipping them with the relevant technical and linguistic skills needed for them to find a job in Thailand. Technical skill courses include hair dressing, dress making, computer literacy and manicuring. The school also provides language courses for English and Thai.

Lessons are held every weekday, starting with skills courses, followed by an hour each for both of the language courses. JRS would fund housing, food and transport for students as well.

This program focuses on building on values and skills of the refugees that come in for these courses. In return, JRS offers job opportunities to those with exceptional qualities for them to contribute back to the community.

A refugee from Sri Lanka who was an initial recipient of aid from JRS eight years

ago is now teaching and working in JRS and other organisations as a translator to help fellow refugees entering the country. Despite the challenges, he started a language school for Sri Lankan refugees in Bangkok last year to help fellow refugees like him.

Another Pakistani refugee has been working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for two years as a freelance artist to design notebooks and publications, and will be sent to continue her studies in Graphic Design.

JRS also has employed another refugee youth as an assistant in view of his punctuality and commitment in attendance. In the centre, personal qualities are as emphasised as academic progress.

JRS still has approximately 400 refugees waiting to attend classes, and are planning to open up another language class despite limited teaching space. Many of the refugees work basic and physically demanding jobs, but still take additional time outside working hours to go for courses. All in all, efforts such as this program by JRS allow for refugees to be equipped with the necessary tools to rebuild their lives, improve their employment opportunities, and also gives them a community to call their own.

she suddenly blurted out that since we were doing God's work, she wanted to be part of it too, and offered us everything free of charge! The equipment was only a year old and had cost her RM100K!

The following day, we went to check out the premises that Monsignor had kindly offered to us free of charge for our classrooms and kitchen, but they were totally unsuitable for our use. Disappointed and out of any ideas, we started to recite the rosary. Before we could finish, we got a call from the same hostel owner offering us her kitchen premises for our training!

If these 2 incidents are not miracles, then I really do not know what miracles are. It was like nothing I've ever experienced in my life, and now I truly believe with all my heart that God really cares and listens to our prayers.

MIRACLES IN SERVICE

A volunteer shares of how miracles while struggling to create a project for youth have shaped his view of God.

Written by: Stephen Frois

All my life I have been just a Sunday Catholic until last year when I joined Clare's Missionary (CM) for a third trip to Sabah to do a recce for a life skills project we had planned for the disadvantaged youth. But the project faced challenges right from the start. The estimated cost of S\$40k was a daunting fact. In addition, Monsignor Primus Jouil, the patron of CM in Sabah wasn't keen to allow us to



charge any of the students any fees. When we asked him how we could finance the class, he simply said we should pray!

I had volunteered for this three month long pilot project to teach basic cooking skills simply because I was not working any longer and had the time and training. I thought that God had directed me to join CM because I could fulfil the requirements for this post. But being almost 60 years old then and having spinal and knee cap problems, I was very half hearted during that trip and I thought this project would never take off, given the challenges.

Nonetheless, we started work on the project. We visited a hostel owner who wanted to sell off her kitchen equipment. After only 10 minutes of negotiations

HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RESPONSE UPDATE (June to September 2018)

Disaster Relief

 <p>Gaza Who: Caritas Jerusalem To respond to the critical health situation in Gaza with a mobile clinic, which will provide clinical examination, basic lab tests, medicines and nutrition. Funds Pledged : SGD 20,000</p>	 <p>India Who: Caritas India To respond to massive floodings in Kerala with provision of food, supplies for hygiene and WASH kits, and rehabilitation support for 15,700 beneficiaries. Funds Pledged : SGD 50,000</p>	 <p>Myanmar Who: Salesian Sisters in Myanmar To respond to floods victims in Myanmar with provision of food to 200 families. Funds Pledged : SGD 12,538</p>	 <p>Mongolia Who: Caritas Mongolia To respond to severe flooding in Mongolia with provision of food, hygiene supplies, and construction of 1 deep well and 10 eco-latrines for 2596 beneficiaries. Funds Pledged : SGD 25,000</p>	 <p>Cambodia Who: Caritas Cambodia To respond to flood victims in Cambodia with hygiene and WASH kits, temporary shelters, food, mobile latrines and water purification units for 6300 families. Funds Pledged : SGD 50,000</p>
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Make Hope Happen





Annual Fundraising Appeal for CHARIS Humanitarian Aid Fund

Join us in being the helping hand of the Church - reaching out to those afflicted by natural disasters and poverty - and **making hope happen.**

Download the donation form from our website at [Make A Donation at www.charis-singapore.org](http://www.charis-singapore.org).

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-  **By Cheque**
Please make your cheque payable to CHARIS HAF.
-  **By GIRO (Monthly Donation)**
Please proceed to our downloadable GIRO Form on our website.
-  **By Credit Card/Paypal (Online Payment)**
Please proceed to makehopehappen.charis-singapore.org

Humanitarian Response

 <p>Nepal Who: The Church of Assumption KTM To construct a deep water borewell for drinking water for villages in Chayanli, Gorkha Nepal. Grant Given : SGD 16,000 (June 2018)</p>	 <p>Thailand Who: Holy Infant Orphanage To fund 17 clothes storage cabinets for 35 children in the orphanage in Mae Sot Tak, Thailand. Grant Given : SGD 2,227 (July 2018)</p>	 <p>Philippines Who: Cebu Relief and Rehabilitation Unit To renovate the office of the Cebu RRU in charge of supporting communities affected by Typhoon Haiyan. Grant Given : SGD 11,620 (July 2018)</p>
 <p>Myanmar Who: Canossa Home in Thanlyin, Myanmar (Canossian Daughters of Charity) To construct a bathing area, a wash and laundry area, a well, and renovation of drainage in a children's home Grant Given : SGD 15,000 (June 2018)</p>	 <p>Who: KMSS (Caritas Myanmar) St. Mary's Primary Education School, Moby, Pekhon Diocese To renovate classrooms and improve school facilities for 120 children. Grant Given : SGD 8,713 (June 2018)</p>	 <p>Who: KMSS (Caritas Myanmar) and MC MAHT Net To conduct a comprehensive study on reducing migration smuggling and anti-human trafficking activities in Myanmar. Grant Given : SGD 49,385 (July 2018)</p>
<p>To provide St Mary's Primary Education School with 5 laterines and 1 water tank. Grant Given : SGD 4,780 (June 2018)</p>		