

Marist Solidarity Cambodia

LaValla Project



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Marist Solidarity Cambodia

Mid-year Report

June 2021

LAVALLA SCHOOL

LaValla School is a Government registered Primary boarding school which caters for children and young people with physical disabilities. As well as offering the normal Government curriculum subjects, LaValla students also have subjects such as Computers, English, Music, Sewing and Physical Education. Each year the Grade 6 students sit for the National end of Primary school examinations which allows them to enrol in Secondary School.

All the teachers at LaValla are people with disabilities and are therefore wonderful role models for the students. The Government pays part of the salary of the teaching staff. In the MSC Organisation over half of the staff are people with disabilities.

With few exceptions, the students come from very poor families who live in the rural areas of Cambodia. Most, because of their disability, or distance have never been able to get to their local schools. Others, who did start schools experienced such discrimination and ridicule because of their disability that they could not continue.

When students come to LaValla, they find everyone has a disability, so very quickly this is no longer an issue. They are able to get on with developing their abilities and grow in self-confidence.

LaValla also offers students a comprehensive health and rehabilitation service which they would never be able to have at home.

When students have completed Grade 6 they have the option of returning home and attending their local High School, residing at LaValla Village and attending the local High School, attending Vocational Skills training course as preparation for employment. The decision as to what they will do depends on a number of factors including age, academic ability and mobility issues. Marist Solidarity Cambodia supports these students in all of these pathways.

STUDENTS



LaValla normally caters for about 90 students but because of the COVID pandemic we have not yet had a new intake of students. As well some of the students did not return because of the uncertainty of the COVID situation. When schools reopen we expect numbers to return to their normal levels.

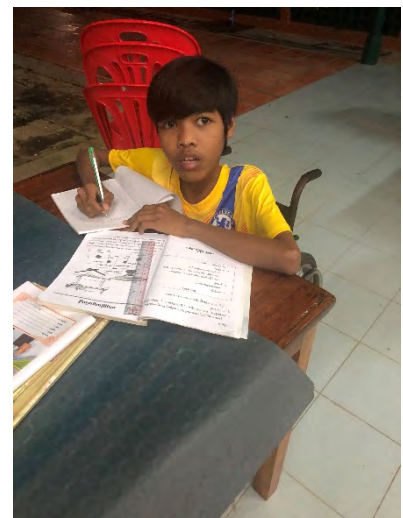


Figure of our current students

	Current (May 2021)		
	M	F	Total
Grade 1	4	2	6
Grade 2A	7	1	8
Grade 2B	7	3	10
Grade 3	3	5	8
Grade 4	7	1	8
Grade 5	3	5	8
Grade 6	6	8	14
	37	25	62



Teacher working with students on-line.

Objectives

At LaValla our focus is to provide

- formal education of children and young people with disabilities at Lavalla School through the increased use of student-centred education models.
- The continued integration of skills training into the Lavalla School Curriculum.
- Transitioning of Lavalla graduates from grade 6 into mainstream secondary school, or if appropriate, vocational skills development programmes..
- Implementation of health and rehabilitation plans for each student through Physiotherapy, surgery and general medical care.
- General maintenance and upkeep of Lavalla School and vehicles
- Provision of living facilities and three meals a day for the students.



Long term impact of the Project

- For the majority of students at LaValla, this is their only opportunity for any schooling, given their home situations and poor mobility.
- The students gain confidence in their own abilities and are able to better understand the range of possibilities ahead of them. The stereotype which assumes that a physical disability also means no intellectual capacity is shown to be wrong. Over the years students have gone on to complete University degrees and gain appropriate employment, which would never have been possible had they not been part of the LaValla Project.
- Students have access to health and rehabilitation services which in many cases greatly improves mobility and dexterity, enabling them to participate in a wider range of activities.
- Students are able to find employment suitable to their physical abilities.

COVID 19

Schools in Cambodia reopened for 2021 in the second week of January after being closed just before Christmas, so all the LaValla Primary school students and the LaValla Village High School and University students returned to normal classes. However on 20th February this year there was a serious outbreak of the COVID virus and schools were forced to close once again. This outbreak was much more serious than any during 2020. We have been through severe lockdown situations through most of April and these are now being slowly lifted, though the spread of the virus has not abated much.

Many schools are providing on-line lessons to their students but our students, being from very poor rural families, have no ability to access these lessons because of cost and isolation. Recently we were told that if our Grade 12 students did not begin to join classes they would not be allowed to sit for their Grade 12 Exams later in the year.

During May we were able to provide mobile phones to all of our Grade 12 and Grade 9 students so they could access lessons with their own teachers and also access online lessons provided by the Ministry of Education. We continue to support them by providing the running costs of the phones.

The LaValla Primary school teachers have been providing lessons each day to those students who can be contacted by phone. Currently we are in the process of providing all of our students with the means to access lessons with their teachers. LaValla staff monitor the work of the students each day.



Delivering emergency food supplies to families and phones to students so they can continue lessons with their teachers. .



Because most of our families are so poor, we were able, with the support of some donors, to provide students with mobile phones to keep contact with their teachers and follow lessons.



The LaValla Health team also remains in contact with our families and where necessary we provide assistance for any health issues they experience.

Given that there has been a prolonged period of lockdown, many of the activities that would normally have been happening have not progressed. Hence the expenses are lower that would normally be expected for this time of the year.

Now with staff able to return we will use funds to support on-line learning, our maintenance programme will resume and while students are away a major renovation project to re-roof and insulate the classroom buildings will resume.

Renovations

During this time when students are absent we are taking the opportunity to carry out some renovations to the classrooms. The buildings, which are now over twenty years old, have metal roofing with no insulation. They become very hot during the summer season. The old roofing material is being completely replaced and good quality insulation is being added. This project was funded by Marist Mission Centre Sydney.



Inclusive Education Programme

When schools recommenced in January 2021 there were 126 students in the inclusive Education Programme. These students are students with disabilities, some who live at home and are supported in various ways to attend their local schools (primary and Secondary), some live at the LaValla Village Hostel and attend the local Government Secondary school, and some attend University or Vocational Skills Programmes.

When schools recommenced in 2021 there were a total of 124 students supported by MSC.

	Residential		Community		Total		TOTAL
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Primary School			6	16	6	16	22
Grade 7 - 9	19	18	10	6	29	24	53
Grade 10 - 12	15	13	3	7	18	20	38
University	7	1	2	3	9	4	13
Total	41	32	21	32	62	64	126

Education

Schools reopened in the second week of January after being shut down due to COVID-19 since early December and our normal programme for supporting students resumed.

In mid-February another serious outbreak of the virus in Cambodia saw all schools and Universities forced to close once again. Students were encouraged to participate in on-line learning.

In March 2021, when it became obvious that schools would not reopen soon, we moved quickly to ensure that all students had access to on-line learning. After surveying all students Misereor funds were used to provide mobile phones to 11 students who did not have one and provide funds for the cost of running the phones. 30 other students received Phones using funds from other donors.



MSC staff have continually monitored the students work and also maintained contact with their teachers at the schools they attend to ensure they are attending the on-line classes. Staff members with IT skill were assigned to assist students when facing online connection issue. Also, a mathematics teacher was asked to be a mentor and provide support for any students who have difficulties with this subject.

Vocational Skills Training.

All Skills Training programmes were closed in February when all school closed and have not resumed. We maintain contact with these 6 students and follow up on any health needs they have and support this.

Family Support

Students who are part of the Marist Solidarity Cambodia LaValla Project come from some of the poorest families in the nation. When the COVID pandemic struck, not only were school closed, but many families lost their means of income because of lockdowns, market, factory and construction site closures.

In April 2021 MSC Staff surveyed families and it became apparent that many were struggling to even provide sufficient food for their families.

Also it became obvious that many needed varying levels of support accessing on-line learning. Given that students had missed most of 2020 schooling and already most of 2021, it was imperative that we provide some assistance so they could access the on-line classes that would be available.

Food Distribution

Each of the 129 families was provided with 50 kg rice and other non-perishable food items, the total value of which was USD\$60.00.

Once restrictions on movement between Provinces were lifted, MSC staff delivered the food supplies to families over a seven day period. Students come from all parts of the country.

In all 129 families received an emergency food package.

During these visits Staff were able to deliver some mobile phones to Grade 9 and 12 students who are preparing for their National Examinations.

We have also been able to install for two families a well for fresh water and toilet systems.



MSC Staff prepare food support packages for families.



Health

While students have been at home for most of the year so far, the normal programme has been curtailed. Health staff have maintained contact with students who would normally need various health services. Where possible the students have been referred to medical services in their local area and MSC has funded these interventions.

Those students who require regular physiotherapy have been provided with appropriate exercise programmes to follow. This is regularly monitored by Health staff. Two students have required surgery on limbs.

New wheelchairs have been provided to 5 students to use at their homes.



**Financial Report
January – June 2021**

Income

Funding Partners - Recurrent	190,163.56
Other Income	<u>10,917.68</u>
Total Income	220,856.24

Expense

MSC ADMINISTRATION EXPENSES	<u>7,570.04</u>
PERSONNEL EXPENSES	<u>82,847.91</u>
PROJECT EXPENSES	
Project Administration	2,412.18
Lavalla School	2,309.16
Food and Provisions	32,324.92
Health & Rehabilitation	2,689.10
Student Support	3,126.10
Education	11,229.00
Social	8,880.54
Special Events	1,720.75
Vocational Training / Employment	177.00
Maintenance	10,567.88
Utilities	6,338.07
Vehicles and Travel	<u>9,038.35</u>
PROJECT EXPENSES	<u>90,813.05</u>
CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT	<u>33,174.63</u>
Total Expense	<u>214,405.63</u>
Net Income	<u><u>6,450.61</u></u>

Dr Nop Sothun
Executive Director
Marist Solidarity Cambodia