



Salesian Missions

World Bulletin

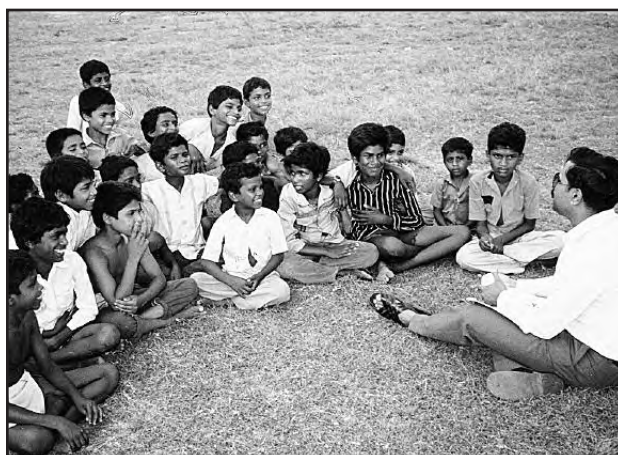
Prepared Exclusively for Special Friends of Salesian Missions
A Written Testimony Of How You Bring God-Saving Grace To A Troubled World

Salesians Reach Out To Child Soldiers To Offer A Better Life

According to recent reports, the rebel group of the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka are setting out to recruit 60,000 children to become soldiers. This alarming news demonstrates that the ongoing 20-year civil war is getting worse ... and that more children than ever are at risk.

The number of child soldiers throughout the world continues to grow at a frightening pace. They are as young as 10 years old, armed with deadly weapons, and instructed to kill anyone who is considered a rival. They turn to drugs as a way to numb the pain and agony of their unthinkable actions.

The situation is so dire that many children are not allowed to leave their homes. Frightened parents can see no other way to protect their children from



being kidnapped and forced to become soldiers. A noticeable drop in school attendance is evidence of the widespread panic. With no freedom to learn or play, it is hard to imagine a sadder way of life.

In an effort to get the upper hand on this crisis, the government has turned to the Salesians for help.

Since the late 1980s, the Salesians in Sri Lanka have operated a center for street

children. In recent years, the focus has shifted toward child soldiers.

In response to the crisis and government requests, the Salesians have opened various centers throughout the country. The objective is to rescue child soldiers and offer them a better life by providing a safe and supportive environment where they can learn new skills and gain emotional strength.

However, there is a major obstacle that is making the rehabilitation process difficult. Specifically, many children are forced back into the army in order to protect their families from retaliation by the rebels.

Despite the massive hurdles, the Salesians are determined in their efforts to rescue as many child soldiers as possible, while at the same time, protecting those at risk of kidnapping.

This Month's Child



Name: Roberto
Age: 8 Years Old
Home: Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Eight-year-old Roberto spends most evenings laughing and playing with his friends at a "Pinardi Shed," a modest Salesian Youth Center in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

Judging by his bright smile, one would never suspect that Roberto and his young friends are homeless runaways who have endured horrific childhoods.

Many of them have been forced by their parents to find "work" on the streets and fend for their own food. But once they get a taste of freedom from the violence and abuse at home, these children rarely return.

Instead, they choose to live on the streets. But it's not long before they discover that their suffering only gets worse.

They resort to stealing or prostitution. Many sniff glue to get high and ease the pain.

Fortunately, this simple Salesian center offers Roberto and his friends a welcomed escape. The center opens its doors at 6:30 every night, providing a safe place to play, nutritious meals, medical care and a good night sleep.

Reminiscent of Don Bosco's first oratory, this "Pinardi Shed" offers a comprehensive Salesian program that is helping street children like Roberto get their lives back on track.

This Month's Call For Prayer

Throughout the world, children are abused, neglected, and exploited. Many endure unbearable pain and suffering. Please pray that we can continue to save as many children as possible – because without the help of good, caring people, they would never learn what it feels like to be safe, hopeful, and loved.



Monthly Missions Report...

In El Salvador...

The Education Minister of El Salvador has given three Salesian Schools a top grade of "A" in quality – Santa Cecilia School, Ricaldone School and Don Bosco School.

Only 12% of all private schools in the country received the highest ranking. The grades were announced after the government, for the first time ever, conducted a full inspection of each educational institution.

The results were published in the national newspapers, giving widespread recognition to the Salesian Schools for their accomplishments.

The top honors also reaffirmed the outstanding value of a Salesian education and the quality of our curriculum, faculty, and facilities.



In Spain...



A new Salesian Center in Elche, Spain, is helping young people through the difficult transition into the real world.

Specifically, the Center caters to children who have spent most of their lives in government-run institutions.

Without any support, these youngsters have trouble taking care of themselves. That's why the Salesians have stepped forward to lend a helping hand in finding them gainful employment and their own housing.

Thanks to the Salesian Center, young men and women are now acquiring the important skills needed to succeed at independent living ... and to become productive and responsible adults.

In Ethiopia...

More than 150 street children in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, will soon have a place to call home. And 750 more at-risk children will benefit from a variety of programs designed to instill confidence and self-respect.

That's because exciting plans are underway for a new Salesian Center that will feature dormitories, classrooms, a recreation hall and cafeteria.



The new Center is the result of the outstanding generosity demonstrated by caring friends like you.

When it opens, the Center will serve hundreds of needy children by providing the immediate basics of food and shelter, while at the same time, building a foundation of values, skills and knowledge that will last a lifetime.

Missionary of the Month: Fr. Alfredo Rocha Vega

Fr. Alfredo Rocha Vega has seen firsthand the remarkable progress made possible by the Salesian presence in Saltillo, Mexico.

Earlier this year, as Rector of Instituto Tecnológico Don Bosco, he helped celebrate the grand opening of a new Salesian Youth Center, which now serves more than 250 at-risk children.

Father Alfredo's main objective is to use the Center as

a resource for programs that combat and prevent the epidemic of school dropouts.

By integrating education, social activities and technical training, Father Alfredo and his staff have already successfully guided many children back into the education mainstream.

Perhaps more importantly, he has instilled self-confidence in his students so they can flourish in their lives.



Although it's a 24/7 responsibility, Father Alfredo knows he has touched many lives in a profound way. And that's what makes it all worthwhile.

Building A Brighter Future

Dear Friends,

At times, it seems as if conditions are hopeless. Children kidnapped and forced into war as soldiers while others live on the streets with nowhere else to turn.

While many of us could never fully comprehend the suffering that these children are forced to endure, we are able to understand that our actions can make a positive impact on their lives.

Through your ongoing generosity – combined with the hard work and dedication of 34,000 Salesian missionaries around the world – we provide life-enriching and life-saving programs that help tens of thousands of people in need.

To put it simply, you and I have the opportunity and the ability to offer hope ... and to build a brighter future.



It is for these reasons that I continue to extend our deepest appreciation for your kindness and generosity. God bless you.

Fr. Emilio