Daniel’s parents never meant to abandon him. Sadly, while fleeing from Goma to Bukavo to escape armed rebels, their beloved 10-year-old son was lost in the chaos.

That was in 2012. Today, thanks to Salesian missionaries at the Don Bosco Center in Bukavo, Daniel has been happily reunited with his family in Kenya.

Things easily could have gone the other way. Living on the streets of Bukavo, Daniel seemed destined to scavenge in order to survive. Then, a friend told him about the Salesian center, and everything changed.

At Don Bosco Bukavo, Daniel received shelter, meals, education, and literacy training. In April 2019, he also joined the center’s first cohort of boys participating in a special family reunification program. And the rest, as they say, is history.

The little boy once feared dead by his parents now attends a carpentry course at Don Bosco Boys’ Town in Nairobi, and eagerly anticipates a stable, bright future surrounded by love.
Monthly Missions Report

In Bolivia...

Nearly 30 years ago, Father Ottavio Sabbadin launched Proyecto Don Bosco in Santa Cruz. Today, the program provides comprehensive rehabilitation, education, and vocational training programs to marginalized youth in desperate need of social inclusion and employment opportunities.

Such opportunities are more important now than ever. Bolivia is South America’s poorest country, and only 7 percent of rural school-age children make it through 8th grade. Many migrate to the city in search of better opportunities, only to land on the streets where bad habits often prove hard to resist.

At the Don Bosco Project, those who are ready discover safe shelter, nutritious meals, and access to psychologists, social workers, healthcare staff, and teachers who collaborate to address the children’s needs. Currently, close to 2,000 youth are receiving relevant education matched to local needs, which positions them for meaningful employment. They also learn “soft” skills such as punctuality and task management to support their success on the job long-term.

Daniel is a shining example of that success. Once, he sold betel nut on the streets; today, he leads a technical team for an Australia-based engineering company.

In New Guinea...

In a country where the deck is stacked against youth, students like Daniel are beating the odds.

Here, close to 25% of children are unable to attend school; 50% of adults are illiterate; and nearly 40% percent of the country’s population lives on less than $1.25 per day. Salesian missionaries at Don Bosco Technical School in Gabutu are determined to permanently break this cycle of poverty.

In courses such as maintenance fitting and machinery, students receive relevant education matched to local needs, which positions them for meaningful employment. They also learn “soft” skills such as punctuality and task management to support their success on the job long-term.

In DRC...

At the Don Bosco Vocational Center near Brazzaville, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, poor girls and young women are “sewing” the seeds for a brighter future.

In response to persistent gender inequalities, which are rooted in educational and employment disparities, Salesian missionaries recently launched a dressmaking program for single mothers and young women who previously left school. Courses include cutting and sewing; in addition, the first 35 participants are learning entrepreneurial skills and will receive small business start-up support once they graduate.

Opportunities like these are particularly crucial in a country where more than half of the population lives in poverty. When women can learn and support themselves with employment-ready skills, they can move themselves, their families, and society forward.

Missionary of the Month: Brother Francis Nhat

Francis Nhat is the first Salesian brother to serve in Pakistan – and he intends not to be the last. In fact, by maintaining a visible presence and setting a positive example, he hopes to inspire others to join him: especially from among the local population.

These aspirations have precedent. While awaiting ordination in his home country of Vietnam, Bro. Francis made a lasting impression on Thomas Hui, then a novice. “One day, [Bro. Francis] shared with us about his mission in South Sudan.” Fr. Thomas recalls. “My heart was touched and I said to myself, ‘I will be a missionary!’”

Counting the Blessed Artemide Zatti (known for his commitment to the sick) and the Blessed Steven Sandor (a youth minister, WWII correspondent, and martyr) as his role models, Bro. Francis finds great joy in being a missionary and in accompanying the young. His Salesian charism will undoubtedly help grow a delegation that has been present in Pakistan for 20 years.

Hope Amid Crisis

Dear Friends,

Since the beginning of the year, we here at Salesian Missions have focused significant attention on the global COVID-19 pandemic – with good reason. It’s a crisis that affects us all … most especially those already suffering. As you’ll read about in our cover story, our missionaries have responded to unexpected and often profound need with self-assurance and creativity.

At the same time – and just as important – these missionaries continue to do the invaluable work they’ve always done to address poverty, poor health, lack of educational and employment opportunities, and more, in over 130 countries around the world.

In an unprecedented time like this, I strongly believe it’s important to seek signs of hope and to celebrate success. It’s in this spirit today that I introduce you to the latest edition of our World Bulletin. May you find joy in the knowledge that you help make this hope possible around the world!

With sincere gratitude,

Fr. Gus Baek

Fr. Gus Baek, S.D.B.