



**LASALLIAN**

**DEVELOPING  
WORLD PROJECTS**

# The Outreach Summer 2009

*Joseph Hatherall & Pauline Ronan*

Did you have a nice summer after a year of study and exams? Were you sunning yourself on a beach in the Med? Or perhaps you did not venture too far from home and explored the countryside around our green and pleasant land?

Joseph Hatherall

*As a teacher it is so easy to while away the summer break with shopping, catching up with friends and family and sometimes just being generally lazy, but this summer I thought I would do something wholly different and incredibly worthwhile..*

Pauline Ronan

For 16 of us it was a summer to remember as we travelled to, Tamil Nadu, India. After landing in Chennai we travelled over twelve hours by train to 'the dust city', Tuticorin. There we were given a welcome fit for a Viceroy with flowers and blessings bestowed upon us. Although our primitive impressions of India were tainted by the squalor and degradation along the train tracks, apprehensions were dispelled immediately after meeting our hosts.

Joseph

*I had no idea what to expect on the train and many people had told me horror stories, but it was fine. The train was second class, it was about half a mile long and consisted of carriages containing endless cubicles that hosted six bunk beds. Many of the cubicles were also shared with strangers. Indians are probably one of the most beautiful races that I have had the fortune to encounter. They are graceful, softly spoken and very peaceful people. It was a real pleasure and inspiration to be in their company.*



**The finished building**

*We arrived to the school where we would be building and the reception was so joyous and amazing. The school is an all boys and is run by the De La Salle Brothers. I have never seen so many boys in the one area before. They were overjoyed to have us there and were fascinated to find out more about life in the UK.*

Pauline

We were going to be working at building a computer room for the school. Work had progressed to such an extent that the walls were almost complete. Yet this did not mean that we had no work to do; with over twenty tons of sand needing to be sifted our work was back-breaking, tedious, and all under the sweltering Indian sun. Not everybody could be on site at the same time so some of our group painted the school gates and the bike sheds. Some taught English in the classrooms whilst others played with the children and also assisted the cooks.



**Students in the finished classroom**

*The pupils we came across, and indeed many Indians who we met, seem to live by three main principles; the love of family, the love of*

*God and the love of Education. This simplistic way of living is refreshing and brought a tear to my eye so many times as I reflected on how we Westerners often get bogged down by a media-driven frenzy of useless and meaningless possessions. I could write for hours on the people we met, the sights we saw and the ways in which I was inspired and moved. I had tears in my eyes often on witnessing a caring act or the stark poverty that I encountered. I also reflected on the value laid on education in India, the segregation which still remains amongst the rich and poor and the many contrasts that I continually saw.*

At the conclusion of our stay we had the satisfaction of assisting at the ceremonious opening of the computer classroom we had been building. I conclude here by hoping you had a fun summer: I know that the sixteen of us did.

*The most special memory that I have of India is the living faith that exists amongst the Lasallian Brothers and the faith that they pass onto the pupils in their care. I truly examined my faith, spirituality and relationship with God this summer and took deep inspiration from the faith that I witnessed around me.*

**FORMER STUDENTS ASSOCIATION  
SILVER JUBILEE BUILDING  
OPENED BY  
Mr. N. JANO RAVEL  
(PRESIDENT, FORMER STUDENTS ASSOCIATION)  
IN THE PRESENCE OF  
JULIA & MARK  
(Lasallian world developing project, UK)  
15-08-2009**

# Recollections from Rwanda

*Amberley Munnings*

My five weeks spent in Nyanza, Rwanda, was to provide me with a different perspective on the world and my part in it. Nothing could have prepared me for what I experienced.

My five weeks were spent predominantly on two separate building sites. For the first two weeks I helped complete some teacher's accommodation by digging a 150cm deep trench for the cesspit. Having started at eight in the morning, the majority of the builders did not leave until four in the afternoon, with no such thing as a tea break in between. Their main tools consisted of a hoe, a pickaxe and a shovel, many being in an unsatisfactory condition. Their achievements are insignificant compared to the buildings that could be produced back home in the same space of time, but the workers themselves left me feeling humble, particularly when we found out that they only earn about one English pound per day.

On the school site we were to build a wall in order to enclose the girl's new dormitories. Foundations needed to be dug two metres deep; an incredible amount of soil to shift I can tell you! Having done this we then had to fill them back up again with cement and rocks which were carried individually up the hill towards the site. As the wall covered an approximately 70m stretch this task was more difficult than it may appear. The final labour was to carry the cement blocks up the hill to start the actual wall. By the time we left Africa, the builders and ourselves had built a wall two metres high on top of the foundations.



A further experience for me was being able to teach English in a nearby orphanage. Now English is my first and only language so one would assume this would be an easy subject to teach, but this assumption would not entirely be true. The task of trying to teach when you do not understand the first language of the pupils is not exactly an ideal situation. However, having said this the sheer enthusiasm of the children more than made up for this slight difficulty and together we managed to construct useful lessons. Some of the topics we focused on were greetings, colours, animals, clothing and games such as bingo that we incorporated into the learning process.

This routine followed from Mondays to Fridays of each week but on the weekends the group had free time to explore Rwanda for ourselves. We visited the king's palace in Nyanza, went on safari in Akagera and visit the beautiful Lake Kivu in Gisenyi. However the visits that had the most impact on myself and the rest of the group were those of the two memorial sites. Rwanda had a horrific genocide during 1994. The rivalry be-

tween the Tutsis and the Hutus resulted in the 90 day massacre of over 800,000 Rwandan people.

Amongst the chaos that surrounded the poverty in the area, the Kigali Memorial stood out as a beacon for respect - so much time and effort had been put in to allow those who had died during the genocide to receive the remembrance they deserved. Pictures had been donated by the relatives so that they could be seen by visitors; there were videos from a selection of children who had lost their parents explaining how they dealt with their grief. Collectively the impact it had was unbelievable and yet you knew that the stories you had heard were only a fraction of the wide-scale hurt and suffering.

The Murambi memorial lies amongst the grounds of what was planned to be a school of technology. During the genocide, the Tutsis were advised to come here in order to escape. Over 50,000 took this advice: astonishingly only as few as 10 survivors remained after the Hutu army found them. One of these survivors now helps run the memorial centre. She told us that she had lost her husband and all of her children during the genocide. What I found unbelievable was how she was able to remain in this place after this horrific past knowing that her family was lost in the grounds surrounding her.

The group set off outside not entirely knowing what to expect; but the rolls of toilet paper (which are a luxury in Rwanda) carried by the women accompany us were not a good sign. What I was about to see I can honestly say was the most shocking of everything I have seen in my life so far. Room upon room of bodies lay upon beds. Although this was shocking enough, what made it even more real was the fact that they had been embalmed; every emotion could be seen on their faces, the terror and the agony they faced just before they were killed. In most cases you could see how they had died; many skulls had been clearly bashed in, limbs had been broken, in the last room we entered there even lay a club which had been used. Men, women and children of all ages had been the victims, we only saw 100 of these, a small fraction of the 800,000 deaths in Rwanda.

What have I gained from the experience? Strange that the project is aimed at helping those in need but that I honestly think I have gained more from them than I could ever possibly give them. I have learnt to appreciate my life and the opportunities that I have been given that before I took for granted. Little things such as a running tap, hot water, my gas stove, supermarkets with an abundance of food on offer, such things as minimum wages, my education and most importantly my family. For nothing can ever replace those people who so many Rwandans have lost.

However one thing remains and that is the hope they have. If I had to say the most important thing I have learnt it is this hope, the importance of keeping it alive and the belief that it will one day lead to better things for those of the developing world.



## Putting out into deep water, reflections on a journey.

*"Birth is a beginning and death a destination and life is a journey..."*

Every Lasallian knows someone who has been on a project to Ghana. After 19 years of projects to Kaleo, almost 230 volunteers, it is inevitable that at every reunion and every casual catch-up at the pub there will be someone who once went on a project to Ghana. When I was appointed deputy leader on the project to Kaleo this summer, this was a resource I was determined to tap into. Everyone has so much advice and when faced with the rather scary prospect of helping to lead a group, I knew I'd need it all. From how to avoid moshi bites to the best weekend trips, Josh, the leader, and I were inundated with information guaranteed to make our project the best yet. However, all I really wanted to know about was the journey. How to survive 18 hours in a tro-tro on bad roads in scorching heat? But while the veterans knew a surprising amount about the benefits of Avon skin-so-soft versus Deet in the fight against the moshi, their advice about the journey was less than satisfactory. Most tried to reassure me—"Oh you don't really remember it and you'll probably sleep for most of the way..."—or, rather memorably, "Its sort of like childbirth—bad at the time but the end result makes it all worthwhile." After hearing this it was with some apprehension that I boarded our flight to Accra at the beginning of July but in the end, I think the former were closer to the mark. Whilst our journey to Kaleo was plagued by bad weather and GMT (Ghana Maybe Time) and took almost two days all in, my only real memories are of watching the beautiful Ghanaian landscape slip by and of getting to know the group in the wee hours as rain battered against the bus windows and Carla tried to sleep on the floor. However it was only after we arrived in Kaleo and it became clear that

## Rwanda Diary

12.07.09 One week over. I am lying on my squidgy mattress, absolutely filthy (I've put off washing for two days now) and probably couldn't feel more content. I'm in Africa, and constantly need to keep pinching myself to remind me of this fact. Tonight after dinner we all ended up lying on the ground outside gazing at the stars. Pretty amazing; nothing, I think, you can catch on camera or describe to others at home. Someone said it reminded them of the bit in "The Lion King" when Mufasa appears to Simba in the stars. I can't even write down what this place is like, you see so much of it on television but it's amazing to see it in person, something I'm so glad I've managed to do in my life.

17.07.09 I had a bit of an "eye-opener" when we were given a huge bunch of bananas to take back to our house. The black, over-ripe ones were pulled off and then offered to some of the local kids who were hanging around looking at us "mzungus" (white people) as usual. The craziness of these kids trying to get a banana was unbelievable — just a banana to eat! The children seemed to multiply as the bananas were handed out, all of them cramming the fruit into their mouths. To compare this to back home where little bratty kids refuse to eat fruit is really something. I'm not sure if I'm explaining very well how I felt as I witnessed this but I hope that in years to come I'll be reminded of it just by reading over this incident.

while our physical journey had ended, so many more were just beginning, that I realised I needn't have worried about our project being like childbirth. For while a baby is so much more important than the giving birth, for us the getting there meant far more than the destination itself.

*"From ignorance to knowing..."*

Our group travelled to Kaleo primarily to complete work on a three classroom block and headmaster's office for a Junior Secondary School, a three year long project started by the 2007 group. When we arrived all that remained to do was to finish the internal walls, plaster inside and out and paint the entire building ready for use in September. Eager to see the buildings finished by the time we left, we set about helping the local builders as much as we could. Mostly this meant lifting breeze blocks, mixing and carrying cement, collecting water, sweeping out the classrooms and, lastly, painting. While at first I am sure we were more of a hindrance than a help, the builders were always good natured, friendly and eager to show us how to do things we were unsure of. By the end they had almost half of the group carrying cement on their heads in true Ghanaian style— a pretty impressive sight! While occasionally they couldn't resist a giggle as some of us tried and failed to lift 50kg bags of cement, they never made us feel any less than welcome on the site. By the last week, thanks to them, everyone knew the proportions for mixing perfect cement and how to sweep out a room (properly) with just a handful of twigs. But I always believe that learning is a two way process, in this spirit we in turn imparted some of our knowledge to them. However, while knowing how to sweep will no doubt prove useful for us, I'm not sure the same can be said for knowing the dance to "Soulja Boy" or the lyrics of American Pie in its entirety, but then again you never know.

*"From childhood to maturity...& innocence to awareness..."*

Of course, learning did not only occur on the building site. In addition to our building work, we also spent a great deal of

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21.07.09 It's halfway through the project tomorrow and I've learned loads so far. My eyes have really been opened by seeing the poverty that does exist; seeing children with no shoes who go crazy for a drink of water or a banana, the builders who are earning 1000 Rwandan Francs a day (about a £1). A bar of chocolate costs 800 francs.

28.07.09 We headed out to Club Tropicana tonight, potentially where George Michael found his inspiration? We travelled there on the back of the motorbike taxis. It was absolutely amazing to be zooming along on the back of a motorbike in the pitch dark with eight or nine others ahead of you in the middle of Africa.

08.08.09 I can't quite get my head around the fact that I'm on a flight from Addis Ababa to London — going home! That's the project done; finished. I've now been to Rwanda, experienced it all and its now home time. I feel all over the place — excitement and sadness and everything else all muddled together. But honestly, I've had the time of my life in Rwanda. Laughing, friendship, hard work, eye-opening, joyful, humbling, back to basics and grateful are all words which spring to mind. It was just brilliant.

*Helen Duncan*

time in the community whether meeting with members of the Education Committee, stopping off in someone's house for a drink of pito on the way home or chatting to schoolchildren outside Gregory House. The people we met and came to know were so welcoming and friendly and seemed so glad to have us in Kaleo. However, even after my two previous projects, the poverty we saw in Kaleo and the conditions that our new friends lived in still shocked me. Buildings made of mud, chil-



**The cool Ghana group on top of Mount Ombo**

dren in torn and tattered clothes, too many people in too small a house - what the locals did not have was stark and obvious. However for all the material things they lacked, they had the widest smiles I have ever seen and while they had so little, they were eager to share it with us, people that, in comparison, had so much. As we observed the poverty in Kaleo, we were forced to mature and appreciate the reality of the lives of the poor in the developing world but equally we learnt that there is more to happiness than money and material gain. In addition, I came to appreciate that being poor did not mean that life could not be rich in so many other ways.

Going on a project is always a very humbling experience but this was especially so in Kaleo. The projects have been there for so long that everyone knows Lasallian. The community as a whole is overwhelmingly grateful to LDWP and to each group which comes to Kaleo. Whilst I appreciated that this must be a true measure of the success of the projects, often I felt that this was praise we did not deserve. After all, it seemed to me that the people we met gave us so much more than we could ever give them. I felt so lucky and so blessed to have been given the opportunity to live in Kaleo for five weeks and yet the locals constantly thanked us for our sacrifice, for leaving our homes to come and work and live with them. For me one of the most touching and overwhelming experiences of the whole project was when we met the local chiefs and our friend Chief Michael thanked us and said "You left your homes and your families to

come and live amongst us. You came to endure with us and this means so much."

*"From loneliness to love..."*

While we gained much from working on the site and meeting the local people we also learned a great deal from each other as a group. Living with a group of almost total strangers for five weeks in a foreign country is no mean feat but we quickly learnt tolerance of one another which gave way to friendship and to love. Soon we found ourselves telling each other things we had never told anyone, let alone people we had only known a short time. It may sound bizarre but within a few weeks, we were so comfortable with one another, it seemed as though we were always meant to be friends. While it's not always easy to live with each other's quirks or mess, the companionship, banter and general good times more than made up for more difficult moments. Lying as a group under the stars in the courtyard of Gregory House was one of those good times and I'm sure I speak for all when I say that despite the heat, hard work, mosi bites, samey food and sore muscles, there was, quite simply, nowhere on earth we would rather have been at that moment. As we lay there on the concrete together I remembered a favourite Gospel reading where Jesus instructs Simon the fisherman to "put out into deep water". Whereupon, Simon catches so many fish that it takes two boats to carry them all back. It struck me that we too had "put out into deep water" by coming to Ghana; we had left all that we knew and embarked into the unknown but, as I looked around our group, I realised that, like Simon, we too had been greatly rewarded with a huge catch, not of fish, but of knowledge, maturity and friendship.

*"...until, looking backwards or ahead, we see..."*

My time in Ghana was an amazing experience and one which has had and I'm sure will continue to have a huge impact on my life. Each member of our group gained so much and while the tans and dodgy mosi bites will fade with time, the memories made and friendships forged are sure to last a lifetime. We left Ghana as the sun was setting on Accra and the light fading on our time there. As we flew home I remembered how worried I had been about the journey to Kaleo and how our group would survive it. Looking back at the end, it seemed so silly to have been concerned about quickly completing the journey and reaching our destination, for as a wise man once said, and I came to appreciate, "victory lies not at some high point along the way, but in having made the journey, stage by stage."

*Elizabeth Cosgrove*

**KAMALAPURAM, Thursday, sometime in July...**

We got done stacking bricks by lunch time, and in the afternoon we helped digging the holes. There are four of them now, big holes about 5' deep. Now we're filling them in with concrete, making chimney stacks up the middle. Me and Sindhil took bags of cement (50kg each) from the storehouse up to the roof and out to the ground to be mixed. Heaviest things I've ever had to carry on my head. We mixed sand and cement, then stones and water, making concrete. We'd filled the holes by 10 to 6 and everyone was exhausted. We'd all pushed ourselves, builders and volunteers alike but we all felt a shared sense of accomplishment. Then, something happened that I never would have expected—a reward from India, the sky opened up and it started to rain.

Most of the team went to the porch for shelter. I might've gone with them, but these kids from the village had been begging me all day to play football with them: I'd promised I would as soon as work was done. There were about half a dozen of them, one was the same kid who'd gotten us a coconut out of a tree on our first week here. All of them were running around in the pouring rain on a dust field that was quickly turning to mud. We played barefoot, them because they had no shoes, me because it was more fun that way, and we spent two hours chasing the ball around the sodden courtyard. To the East of us, the mountain got framed with steam and cloud, and the dust swept up out of the village and a memorable day faded into night

*Ethan James*