



The Edmund Rice Ministries Foundation Philippines team at the Mangrove Project planting site – an initiative combating the effects of climate change in the Sama Badjao community in Bato, Leyte.

Welcome to the second newsletter of 2022.

After more than two years of pandemic travel restrictions, it has been amazing for the team to resume in-country visits again. We were able to travel to Zambia, Kenya, Peru, Bolivia and the Philippines in 2022 to carry out monitoring and familiarisation visits. It is great not only to see the amazing work happening on the ground, but also to build and strengthen connections with our partners in the Edmund Rice family.

The ERD strategic planning process has been underway this year, and a key emerging theme of the new strategy is collaboration. We are engaging with Edmund Rice Foundation Australia to see how we can work together more effectively to support our project partners to deliver the biggest impact in their development projects. Through this process, we are also looking at a new approach to delivering the capacity development project with a focus on locally-led initiatives.

As 2022 comes to an end, we acknowledge everyone we have worked with during this year. Thanks to our partners in Edmund Rice Mission all over the world. And a sincere appreciation to our generous donors for your invaluable support. Together, we will continue to support the liberation of people and communities from poverty and injustice.

2023 promises to be another exciting year in ERD and we look forward to working with our partners and supporters as we implement our new strategic plan.

Wishing you a happy Christmas and warm wishes for 2023.

Fiona Dowling
Chief Executive

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Project Spotlights



EREEP Youth Volunteers at the 'End Rape Culture' walk

Edmund Rice Eldoret Empowerment project: 'End Rape Culture' Walk and Fashion Gala

The Edmund Rice Eldoret Empowerment project (EREEP) operates in the Lngas community in Eldoret, Kenya. EREEP empowers girls through life-skills workshops and clubs so that girls have a safe space to voice their concerns, advocate for their rights and receive the support they need to stay in school. The project also works with the teacher, parents and schools to build their capacity to support girls in the community. Through engagement with the girls, parents and teachers, it was identified that Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) was identified as one of the challenges affecting girls in the community, where 1 in 2 women reported that they or a woman they know experienced a form of violence since the pandemic. However, it remains the most underreported crime in the Lngas area. There is reluctance by many survivors to officially report violations due to fears of repeated violence, uncertainty if action will be taken and lack of accountability as traditional court systems are often used to settle most allegations.

EREEP works in partnership with FABWIL CARE, which provides services to survivors of rape and works to strengthen the response of the legal and health systems in the area. Together they facilitated the 'End Rape Culture' campaign to advocate for change and to raise awareness on SGBV. In July, the campaign held sensitizations forums through two secondary schools and two colleges reaching about 300 youth. Additionally, a Mtaani (Community) sensitization reached about 100 local community members, and a 5km Walk through the Eldoret central business district saw over 300 participants distributing information brochures and placards, and engaging people on the street. These campaign initiatives cumulated in the 'End Rape Culture' Fashion Gala with a turnout of over 250 people. The event creatively showcased the rights of girls and women through fashion and culture. The programme included a moment for candle lighting for victims of SGBV, conversations on culture focusing on the Kalenjin Culture (where the projects are based) and its influence on SGBV and girls rights, and interactions with specialist health workers.

'It has been overwhelming to interact with the community on issues of sexual and gender-based violence, seeing how the community still has so much to do to address SGBV, acknowledging their inadequate information on SGBV and see them open up on how victim blaming, shaming and silencing in the community is one of the rape cultures that keeps on giving perpetrators their freedom.'

- Clalffin Achimba, EREEP Programme Officer

The 'End Rape Culture' campaign has been effective in achieving its goals. It has challenged attitudes towards SGBV and linked the community and girls to support systems in hospitals and child services. It also engaged relevant authorities in an effort to influence girls' lives so that they can pursue their rights in a supportive environment and advocated for change to stop discriminatory practices such as silencing victims of abuse. Many thanks to Misesan Cara for supporting this critical project.

Empowering Girls through Education in Sierra Leone

Girls' access to education is a major problem in the Small Bo Chiefdom in Sierra Leone. The chiefdom is one of the most patriarchal chiefdoms in Sierra Leone, where the intensity of the eleven-year rebel war, outbreak of the deadly Ebola Virus, and economic impact of the Covid-19 global pandemic are making women and young girls even more vulnerable. Men are traditionally viewed as the breadwinners and the community does not value educating girls; they believe their job will be to have children and take care of the home. If a family does send a girl to school, the girl is always the first to be taken out of school and made to work if the household faces financial difficulties. During the 2019-20 academic year, it was reported that 75% of girls dropped out of school compared to 25% of boys.

In response to this gross inequality in educational attainment, Edmund Rice Mission in West Africa is currently implementing a yearlong pilot project aiming to improve the educational status of 70 girls in the chiefdom who attend the St. Joseph Secondary School and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Secondary School. The project works with the community and relevant stakeholders to ensure that the girls are allowed to access education and to decrease the risk of them being withdrawn for childhood marriage, for family work or due to teenage pregnancy. The project will also increase community awareness and commitment to educating girls from marginalised families and increase understanding within the community of the benefits of girls being educated.

This project was launched in September, and we look forward to seeing the impact of these initiatives throughout the 2022-23 academic year.

Update from the Edmund Rice Mission Capacity Development Project

The capacity development project picked up momentum in the second half of the year. This Autumn, governance workshops took place with the Latin America Mission Area (LAMA) leadership team and the Africa Province leadership team. The LAMA team requested a workshop to look at their structure, which has been revised following their regional Chapter in July. The workshop in the Africa Province delved into Constitutions in their area. Governance expert Peter Moore from Caplor Horizons facilitated the discussions and offered guidance and expertise on their respective governance and oversight concerns.

In September, finance training via Zoom took place in the Africa Province. Over five weeks, 12 participants were trained in modules that included: Overview of Finance Management and Internal Controls; Donor Compliance and Reporting; Budget Preparation; Budget Monitoring; Procurement/Value for Money; and Donations in Kind. It was a great refresher for the project personnel in the province.

After the External Evaluation of the project from 2018-2021 was completed earlier this year, the consultants, Out of the Box Kenya, were contracted to do a stakeholder consultation. As the project is now under the governance of ERD, it is a good time to take a step back and reexamine the best approach in supporting our development projects. This will enable us to revise the design of the project to empower our local partners. We will receive the report before the end of the year, and look forward to incorporating the findings into our 2023 project plan.



West Africa Mission Coordinator Br. Abu distributing school materials to one of the beneficiaries from Ahmadiyya Muslim Secondary School and her uncle



Africa Province Finance Training on Zoom

ERD Update

2022 Project Visits

After more than two years of virtual engagement, ERD staff were delighted to finally resume in-country visits to project sites. Read about the trips to Zambia, Latin America, Kenya and the Philippines below.

Zambia

In August 2022, Naidi McDonnell (Programme Manager) and Abigail Carney (Capacity Development and Communications Manager) travelled to Zambia to visit projects in Mongu, Livingstone and Mazabuka and the Africa Province Mission Office in Lusaka. The trip started in the Western Province, where the ERD team visited the Western Cluster project. The project operates in three communities – Luampa, Limulunga and Senanga – with the project office in Mongu. The Western Cluster project takes a results-based, community engagement approach to address the root causes of poverty through livelihoods, education, WASH and advocacy initiatives.

Over four days, the ERD team was able to talk to many of the beneficiaries of the livelihoods programme, which focuses on empowerment through agriculture.

The programme operates in all three project sites to educate participants in agricultural techniques, and provides agricultural inputs and mentorship to the beneficiaries. The project teams in each area work closely with the Department of Agriculture and their extension officers to educate and up-skill the beneficiaries. Naidi and Abigail were able to visit many of the farms and hear directly from the beneficiaries on the impact the project has had on their lives. Many of the households, which are largely female-headed, reported increased agricultural yields, which has led to more income, improved nutrition and food security.



Abigail and Naidi pictured with beneficiaries of the Western Cluster project in Luampa, Zambia

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The ERD team also heard about the advocacy aspect of the project, which focuses on preventing early childhood marriage and teenage pregnancy. Both the project team and beneficiaries spoke of parents previously viewing childhood marriage as a potential solution to financial difficulties. After participating in the project, many parents became aware of the dangers and negative impact it can have on their children; Gender Based Violence is often common within these marriages. One beneficiary, who had married her teenage daughter to a 28-year-old, attended the advocacy workshops. Following the training she visited her daughter and found that she had been taken out of school and was regularly beaten by her husband. The woman took her daughter home and said she would not marry any of her other daughters like that. There were many stories of parents now rethinking childhood marriage as a potential option and also checking on the safety of their daughters who have been married. The advocacy project has been very successful, and beneficiaries have requested the project be expanded out to more remote areas to ensure everyone is educated on the dangers associated with this harmful cultural practice.

After monitoring the Western Cluster project, the ERD team travelled to Livingstone to visit the St. Raphael's Secondary School, where they saw the teacher homes and science labs that had been previously funded by Misesan Cara and ERD private donors. The team then went to Mazabuka to visit St. Edmund's Secondary School, Changa Changa Primary School and the St. Paul's Training Centre. They had the opportunity to visit classrooms and meet the administration and pupils of each school. The trip ended in Lusaka where the Africa Province Mission Office welcomed them and facilitated a productive day of meetings with their team and the Africa Province Leader, Br. Alfred Banda. Special thanks to Africa Province Mission Coordinator Br. Clement Sindazi and South Central Mission Coordinator Reuben Chongo for their planning and coordination of the trip. We also thank Misesan Cara for their funding of the Western Cluster project, and their past support to Edmund Rice Mission in Zambia.

Latin America

In October, Abigail headed off to Latin America to visit the Fe y Alegría and Reaching New Horizons projects in Peru, the Centro Hermano Manolo project in Bolivia, and the Latin America Mission Office. Both the Peruvian projects work with their respective school communities to provide academic reinforcement and psycho-social support to the pupils and the wider school community.

The impact of the pandemic in Peru has been devastating. Despite a very strict and long lockdown, Peru had one of the highest COVID death rates in the world. In-person schools were closed for two years and education was delivered remotely. The projects operated throughout the pandemic delivering their crucial services and providing additional support, including the provision of food baskets and second-hand mobile phones and computers so pupils could access virtual learning.

In March 2022, in-person classes resumed, and since then the projects have been able to deliver their services again face-to-face. After two years of lockdown, the projects are now playing an even more critical role. The psychologists have reported their students are facing more emotional problems, including bullying, aggressive behaviour, stress and nutrition problems. Since many families didn't always have access to technology or the resources to pay for mobile data for virtual class, the students this year are in the process of improving academically to regain the knowledge lost. It was wonderful meeting the staff of both projects and going on home visits to see the reality that the beneficiaries are facing.

Abigail was also able to travel to Bolivia to visit the Centro Hermano Manolo project. The project attends to 76 children and young adults who all work in La Cancha, a market in the city of Cochabamba. They accompany working children and adolescents and focus on four areas: personal development, educational strengthening, family accompaniment and promotion in technical training. Abigail was able to visit the centre, meet with families of the beneficiaries, and spend time with project manager Sandra Caiguara, as well as the Christian Brothers community there. It was an eye-opening experience to see the reality of life in Bolivia.



Project psychologists from Reaching New Horizons showcasing their Mental Health Day campaign



Project Manager Paola Miranda, Latin America Mission Coordinator Elmer Hurtado and Abigail Carney in Chimbote, Peru

While Abigail had met various stakeholders in the area via Zoom over the last several years, it was great to finally meet governors Br. Ricardo Glatz and Br. Ever Cieza and project manager Paola Miranda, in-person, and connect on a personal level.

The success of the projects are due to the dedicated staff in each project, and the invaluable support of the Mission Office personnel, led by the Latin America Mission Coordinator Elmer Hurtado. Thanks to the Edmund Rice mission team in Latin America and the Christian Brothers communities for welcoming ERD back to the area.

Kenya

Fiona Dowling (Chief Executive)'s visit to Kenya in October: *This was my first visit back to East Africa since before the pandemic and it was great to be back! The visit was planned in collaboration with Edmund Rice Foundation Australia (ERFA) so I was delighted to be joined by ERFA's CEO Bren Arkinstall.*

We visited projects in Nairobi which have been supported by ERD and ERFA: the Ruben Centre, the Edmund Rice Centre and the Edmund Rice Catholic Education Centre (ERCEC). These education and community development projects are all situated in densely populated informal settlements (slums) in Nairobi. It was highly impressive to see the progress made in all projects, despite the challenges of recent years. And it was a joy and privilege to re-connect with old friends and forge new connections. We had positive and productive meetings with Brs Alfred Banda and George Massay of the Africa Province Leadership team. Planning sessions were held with the ERFA Kenya team in their office in Nairobi to consider challenges and opportunities for enhanced partnership going forward. Andrew and Hedwig from Wholistic Leadership, who have been supporting the Ruben Centre, hosted a meeting with us to share learnings and plan.

We were deeply grateful and humbled by the warm welcome and hospitality. Asante sana.



Fiona Dowling and Bren Arkinstall visiting staff and pupils at the ERCEC in Embulbul

The Philippines

In November, Naidi travelled to visit the projects of the Edmund Rice Ministries Foundation Philippines (ERMFP), which are supported by ERD. While in Cebu City, she had the opportunity to see the Compassionate Education for Building and Uplifting Families project in action. This project supports families that live in the city's cemeteries and on the sidewalks. An award-winning nutrition programme has been set up with the families to teach them about nutrition, cooking methods, and budgeting, and provides a meal a day for the children attending school. In addition, the team also trains the families on urban gardening and life skills, and they carry out a trash for cash programme. The team works tirelessly to help beneficiaries attain their legal documents and get them on T-VET courses. These courses can be anything from housekeeping and cosmetics, to IT and culinary skills. Once enrolled, the team accompanies each of the beneficiaries through their educational journey and helps them secure an internship to gain work experience. The project has been a great success with beneficiaries reporting improvements in many aspects of their lives.



The nutrition programme in the Chinese Cemetery in Cebu City

Naidi's visit included two more projects that serve the Sama Badjao community in Bato, Leyte. Only a week before her arrival, the area was struck by Typhoon Paeng and a flash flood devastated the area. Everyone had been evacuated with just one hour's warning. 48 houses were completely destroyed, but luckily everyone survived. Naidi and the team spent several days visiting the Sama Badjao community, reviewing the damage and preparing an emergency funding application. The Sama Badjao community are known as the sea gypsies of the Philippines; their whole way of life is strongly tied to the sea. Because they live in stilted houses in the water, the provision of emergency tents was not a feasible solution for this community. Fortunately Misaan Cara have agreed to fund the rebuilding of 20 traditional houses in a culturally sensitive response to this emergency.

The importance of the Mangrove Project became ever more evident following this disaster. The project's aim is to increase biodiversity and reinforce mangrove habitats as a natural response system to combat the effects of climate change. Although 5,000 mangrove propagules were washed away, 600 seedlings survived. In years to come, the mangrove will provide this community protection from increasing extreme weather. During her visit, Naidi met the Sama Badjao Women's Association. The project team have worked hard to establish and support this Association. They have helped them gain a platform to advocate on their own behalf, ensuring the voice of this marginalised indigenous group is heard. Naidi also had the opportunity to meet the ERMFP Board of Directors and Management Team. We would like to thank the local project team, particularly Butch Salera, Josefa Pizon and Dominic Carangue, and the wider Philippines projects for hosting Naidi during her visit.

News and Events from the Edmund Rice Network

Book Launch: *Beauty Through Broken Windows*

On September 8, the book launch of *Beauty Through Broken Windows: Empowering Edmund Rice's Vision Today* took place at the Marino Institute of Education. The book features accounts from 18 people from a wide-range of backgrounds on how they experience Edmund Rice's vision today.

The editors Aidan Donaldson and Br. Denis Gleeson bring together a diverse range of international contributors who, inspired by the gospel call to service, looked out onto a world in need and responded.

Br. Denis has generously committed to donating his earnings from the book to the Maternal and Child Health programme in the Ruben Centre in Kenya. We thank Br. Denis for his generous support of Edmund Rice Mission. To order the book, please visit: www.veritas.ie.



Fiona Dowling presenting the book to Ruben Centre Deputy Director Zipporah Mwangi

Edmund Rice International November Training

Edmund Rice International (ERI) hosted a diverse group of members of the Edmund Rice network from across the world. A total of nine participants from ministries in Australia, India, Argentina, Canada, Tanzania, South Africa, Italy and the Philippines brought diverse perspectives to the training program held in Geneva from November 6th to the 21st. Throughout the training, participants explored the evolution of Advocacy, Human Rights and how the United Nations mechanisms are designed to protect Human Rights around the world.



The opportunity to actively engage in the United Nations 75th Universal Periodic Review and 45th Treaty Body Committee was an incredible experience for many of the participants.

'It was a very surreal experience to witness the review of my own country and to understand how important this process is to holding government accountable when it comes to Human Rights.' -Violet Mary

Participants gained the tools to use a rights-based approach to develop an Advocacy Plan that could be used in their own community or on a national or global level.

'It was thought-provoking to be asked to consider issues in my own community through the lens of advocacy rather than that of charity.' -Michelle Rapier

ERI was granted ECOSOC status at the UN in 2012, and is committed to working for children and young people who are marginalised because of poverty, lack of access to education, legal status, environmental degradation, or involvement in armed conflict. ERI continues its important work at the international level to promote and protect the rights of children and young people particularly in regard to education.

Pictured above: Participants in Geneva training. Back L-R: Matias Barboza (Argentina); Br. Terry Dowling (ERI); Br. Amos Kutwa (Tanzania); Br. Kevin Mullen (ERI); Br. Brian Bond (ERI); Br. Tino D'Abreu (ERI); Br. David Silva (CLT). Front L-R: Violet Mary (India); Daljit Yadav (India); Rebecca Nalwanga (Australia/Uganda); Sr Josephine Mata FAS (Philippines); Misqah Appollis (South Africa); Michelle Rapier (Canada)

Update from the ERD Board

Reflection from Joe Tynan, ERD Board Director, on his recent trip to Latin America:

The reason I decided to travel to Perú and Bolivia during my summer vacation in Paraguay is quite simple: to encounter the real situation in the Edmund Rice Development Projects in Latin America.

Edmund Rice offered education to the neglected children of Waterford as the pathway to self-confidence, mutual respect and generous service to others. Liberation from the slavery of oppression of various kinds is the goal of true development. The projects supported by ERD are evidence of such development.



Joe visiting families of the Fe y Alegría project in the Canto Grande neighbourhood of Lima

Material poverty is the most significant kind of poverty in an unequal and unjust world and is the template for all other kinds of poverty. For that reason dedication to the eradication of poverty through education, advocacy and capacity building is essential to the mission of the global Edmund Rice movement. The vulnerability of encountering people made poor has long-term healing effects because humans are made for community. The approach in Perú and Bolivia is respectful community building. This is a slow process of development but the fruits are abundant. ERD, in my view, is essentially at the service of those made poor. That attitude or stance is worth embracing.

There are currently 17 Brothers of various ages, cultures and language communities in the Latin America Mission Area. The spirit of HOPE is palpable among the Brothers. It's not a matter of wishful thinking, optimism, or a 'glass half full' approach. No, it is rather the deep conviction that no matter what may happen, there will always be a transforming presence of compassion and love that will never, ever fade away.

One Brother in his 80's exemplifies that spirit for me. His way of serving is by welcoming young adults who are Transitioning into his home and with them creating an accepting and nurturing community. Respect for Gender Identity is a value this Brother enthusiastically promotes, despite being brought up with very different priorities and prejudices. The number of Christian Brothers seems to be dwindling, but the legacy of the Brothers lives on among women and men who have embodied his spirit of compassion, liberation and presence.

The promotion of Human Dignity is the goal of ERD and I am most grateful for the opportunity to witness that in the projects I visited recently.

Muchas gracias!



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www.edmundricedevelopment.org/donate

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