



Marianist International Volunteers

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**Current MIV volunteer stories
The MIV at the 33th General Chapter
of the Society of Mary in Rome
News from the US Marianist volunteers'
program MVP**

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Marianist International Volunteers

Dear friends of the Marianist Family,

The MIV is happy to share this new edition of its on-line Newsletter with you again, in which we have included the latest news regarding international Marianist volunteers, especially some stories of current MIV volunteers, as well as some news about the US Marianist Volunteer Program, MVP. In this edition, Gabriel, MIV volunteer from Argentina in Peru, gives us an update on his mission in the Hills of Otuzco, as he shares with us his experience of community life with the other Marianist volunteers he lives with.

Besides, we are glad to know that Jane, from Malawi, after almost two years of running visa procedures and other errands, has finally arrived in Bangladesh, where she's collaborating as an MIV volunteer with the IIRD: Integral Institute of Rural Development.

Additionally, Maria, an English teacher with a Marianist school in Valencia, also recently arrived in Kenya as an MIV volunteer. It is interesting

to remind you thanks to her experience that the MIV also accepts people who can only volunteer for a few months. Even though the MIV prefers that people volunteer for at least one year, we don't rule out the possibility that some people may do a shorter term of service, in view of their limitations to commit themselves to a longer period of time. Maria shows us that her short experience as a volunteer is also very enriching for her as well as for the people she shares her mission with.

On the other hand, the MIV was also present at the General Chapter of the Society of Mary in Rome, Italy, during the month of July. The MIV wishes to say a word of gratitude to the SM for their invitation and especially for having given us the possibility to make a presentation of the MIV during the tight schedule of the Chapter. This opportunity was very important to let people know about the current mission of the MIV, and the stories of our volunteers, so that in their respective units they can help the MIV publicize this information, especially to the

people interested in volunteering internationally with the Marianists. Another initiative of Marianist volunteerism, but at a national level, is the one that for over a year the Marianist Province of the United States has been carrying out with their volunteer's program MVP. In this edition, we share the story of one of their volunteers, and we also invite you to share the information about this program, which accepts US volunteers to work either in the United States or in Mexico. Congratulations to the MVP program for their success in their first year of life! Last but not least, and in connection with the MVP program, there used to be another program in the US before this one, called MVSC: Marianist Voluntary Service Communities. It was thanks to this program that I got to know for the first time what being an international Marianist volunteer was like. Ten years after this experience, some of the former MVSCers will be sharing with us how their lives today are still happily influenced by this experience as

Marianist volunteers, even though ten years have gone by. We hope you enjoy this edition of the MIV newsletter, and remember that we always need your collaboration to publicize this material, so it can reach to more people interested in the MIV, people who may support its mission by helping recruit volunteers, by accompanying them, by even offering some resources to those volunteers who may have some difficulties to do their experience, or by offering their own works (parishes, schools, NGOs) where MIV volunteers may be received. Moreover, your gentle contribution in distributing this newsletter may inspire more people to become prospective Marianist volunteers in the future. Your collaboration is greatly appreciated by the MIV.

Another world is possible for us all,

José Luis Pérez
MIV Coordinator



The MIV in Peru

Greetings from Otuzco to the Marianist Family around the world. My days as a Marianist volunteer here are running pretty smoothly. I love my job; I enjoy all the activities I'm doing, especially the visits to the "caserios" (scattered villages). This week we'll be having a short formation retreat for the Pastoral Agents of the "caserios", so we needed to postpone some of our visits.

We have also prepared some meetings and activities with the youth (from Otuzco and from the hills). In the meetings that we organize, we try to choose the topics according to the youth's needs and interests, always including our relationship with God in everything we do. This idea of working more intensely with the youth is something that started this year, and for the time being it is a very rewarding thing,

even if some of the goals of the program still need to be redefined. We continue working on the radio, where we make our religious program, which by the way has an amazing rating! This is how my days go by here (very fast by the way). Actually half a year has already passed without my realizing it. As far as my community life is concerned, we continue to take good steps. We have become more consolidated as a working team, but most of all, as a family (a special kind of family if you



want). My comments may sound a little unsubstantial and even sentimental, but I can undoubtedly state that it is very characteristic of the experience as a volunteer to live very strong emotions and to be nurtured by the love of God, reflected in the gestures and attention of the people with whom we share our lives. I also believe that the community facilitates this fabulous and spiritual exchange, since the good predisposition of our hearts comes directly from



the Formation Center, namely, from what we daily share in community.

Gabriel Vasco / MIV volunteer from Argentina in Otuzco, Peru



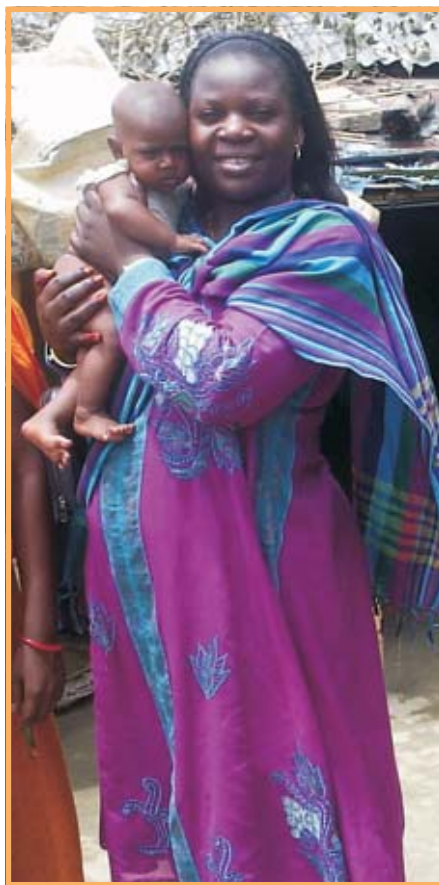


**Marianist
International
Volunteers**

The MIV in Bangladesh

Expectations

I am looking forward to a year of total growth both spiritually and intellectually. I expect my services in Bangladesh to bring a greater discovery of myself in terms of the above aspects. I expect to learn many things from the people of Bangladesh, be it culture, language and their way of living. At the same time I expect to impart to them within my capacity the knowledge I have. I also expect to discover the weaknesses and strengths of my spiritual life and to amend where necessary. During this coming year of service, I am looking forward to serving the people of Bangladesh without looking into their status. I expect to bring amongst the people of Bangladesh Christ, who is the saviour of every humankind. Excitement and fear overwhelm me at the moment. I am excited



that what I have been waiting for is at last materializing. But sometimes I fear that I may be too limited and not worthy to serve/work in such a different area with strangers around me, but I know this is because I am just human. The fact that I am a Christian called to serve others in continuation of His mission, fills me with endless Faith and Hope that my coming year of service in Bangladesh will be a success.

How I learned about MIVs

I was serving as the Project Secretary with Miracle Technical School for older orphans in my country, Malawi. One day back in 2003, my Director Brother Peter Daino received an MIV brochure and asked me to make a copy of it for his use. I have been aspiring to become a volunteer locally or internationally

since my childhood, and when I saw this brochure I said jeez, this could be my way toward international volunteering. So this is how it all started.

Setbacks

The whole process to become an MIV up to date has never been smooth. I faced a lot of challenges in terms of communication. For things to move fast, I needed to communicate through e-mail preferred to post mail (Though other circumstances forced me to use post-mail). Email in my district Karonga is a very new technology and few people possess it. I struggled so much to get connected, as it is very slow and expensive. There were a lot of documentations involved, especially in the process of the Visa. Documents followed each other successively to Bangladesh



by post mail and by email. The problems with post mail were that they took longer than expected, and this delayed the process of the Visa. It took about seven months for the VISA to get out. Though it did, still there was one more problem: here in my country, Malawi, the Bangladesh Embassy is not available yet, which is where I was supposed to pick up my VISA. The nearest Bangladesh Embassy from my country is in Zambia. I had to travel to Zambia with a mind of just collecting it, but that was not the case. While there, I was asked to apply for the VISA and wait for process. It took me about five weeks to get it. A lot of Patience, Faith and Hope was all that took the Bangladesh Directors, the MIV Directors and myself through. The second challenge I faced and

still face is Discouragement from friends and relatives. In my culture women are not encouraged to partake in challenging ventures like the one I am aspiring for. Therefore I get a lot of discouraging statements and comments about my forth-coming venture in Bangladesh. The delay of the VISA hence the delay of the beginning of my mission has also contributed to the discouragements I get from people. As if they believed that my being of service in Bangladesh will never come to pass and that I was using the delay of the VISA as an excuse. There are very few members from our Lay Marianist Group who have continuously supported me in prayer and deed, so that I don't lose hope. I also face the challenge that things did not go according to the way they were planned. According to the

contract with IIRD, I was supposed to start my services in Bangladesh in January 2006, which means I have stayed overdue for about five months now.

Why am I interested to serve in Bangladesh?

Indeed I did not waste time debating on which country to serve from the list I was given when saw Bangladesh was there. The country Bangladesh is no new name to me. When I was a small girl I remember my father used to share the news he heard on the radio with the family, and the news about Bangladesh came along more frequently, and they were very exciting. I grew up with a big interest in this country, and got very excited about its news, be it on the radio or in the newspaper. I have been reading

the Marianist Album since 2001 and the news about the IIRD program in Bangladesh have always caught my interest, and this is how the wish to serve the people of Bangladesh started to





**Marianist
International
Volunteers**

grow. I had two fellow workers from Miracle who were sent to IIRD, Bangladesh to witness and learn from our friends there. They came back enriched with news about Bangladesh and were



more than tired responding to so many questions and explanations, that in the end they decided to give me a VCD about IIRD, which I watch now and again because it is so interesting. And when the chance came for me to choose which country I wanted to serve, I went straight for Bangladesh. I feel that for an amateur international volunteer like myself, it would be easier to serve in a country that I know something about. At least I know what people look like, how they speak, what they do,



how they live and what their homes look like, how they eat, what they eat, how they dress, and even more to my interest I know what Father William Christensen and some of the IIRD directors look like. Besides, when I look at the segment of people that the IIRD serves, I see people who are more needy than the ones I have been serving at Miracle, than the people we call needy in Malawi. Therefore I feel there is a bigger need to stretch my helping hand to them. I have a strong feeling that my service will be more needed amongst the people in Bangladesh.

I strongly feel I owe appreciation to Jose Perez (MIV Coordinator), Father William Christensen (IIRD Director), Eunos Ali (IIRD Administrator), Brother Peter Daino, (MIRACLE

Director), The Marianists, The Chaminade Lay Marianist Group, my mother, Juliet Mbale, The Sisters of the Poor Clares in Malawi, Mr. Amos Chindamba, Mr. and Mrs. Nyamweya, Mr. Timothy Kamangadazi, Mr. F.S. Banda and others who have supported me especially in prayers, so that my Bangladesh venture becomes a success.

Jane Mbale / MIV Volunteer
from Malawi in Bangladesh



The MIV in Kenya

I'm feeling really filled, filled in all aspects! I'm calm, relaxed, Happy! The truth is that I had never imagined that this would fill me up so much. I love all the moments of the day: in the morning I am full of energy, and I joyfully wait for my guardian, Mossos, to pick me up to take the "matatu" together, this is the name of the mini van which is their only means of transport here. The bus passes along the slums, an inhuman and unimaginable area, to later end up in the school.

The school is called "Our Lady of Nazareth". I always look forward to being assigned a class to start and "learn" with them. The truth is that I always teach them a thing or two in Spanish, and lots of songs too. They want me to finish my English lesson so I can teach them some little Spanish. I also enjoy the basketball team that we are forming with the girls. I really love playing with them. On Tuesday we started a championship that Brother Michael and I prepared

together. He trains the boys, and I train the girls. When I told them that I was going to teach them to play basketball, I found myself surrounded by 250 girls and only one ball! Can you imagine that? No, you have no idea! But you can't imagine either how happy I felt at that moment! Finally the group was reduced to 34 girls (don't ask me how I did it, because I don't know it myself!). So then I formed 5 or 6 teams, and we started the league on Tuesday. We started from scratch, honestly, they didn't even know how to bounce a ball, so it's getting sometimes a little complicated, but it's also immensely beautiful at the same time. I love it!!! They are so eager to play, I think they are more eager to play than I am!!! I will later tell you how it all went, that is, if we have beaten the boys or not!

I also enjoy my break times for lunch, I speak with the other teachers, and they are all wonderful with me. I also like seeing how the kids eat those dishes of

white rice with their hands, especially the four-year-olds. I enjoy the afternoons, at around 4, when Mossos comes and picks me up and we come back in the "matatu". He is the first one to hear all my stories of the day, he tells me his, and that's how we spend our 40 minutes to get back home, we really have a great time together!!! At 6:45 we have dinner with the 6 kids and with the 2 Marianists I live with, and that's when I also share my daily experiences with them. I also enjoy the night, I play cards and ping-pong with the kids, I teach them and they teach me new games, and I get out to the small terrace to write my journal and to read some of the books that I've brought here with me. In fact, I don't read that much. I'd much rather contemplate the sky and see the eagles that fly only 3 or 4 meters above me, it's amazing!

Fr. Martin is now preparing a 5-day safari for me in Masai Mara, one of the most beautiful parks in Africa. Fr. Alan, who is also from the US, and who is

here like me, namely, because he really wanted to live this experience, did this safari last week, and he showed me all his pictures. He really enjoyed it like a child. He's 74 years old, and he feels like a boy, he oozes out energy and illusion everywhere, I really admire him!!! The other day he came to the school to give a talk to the teachers there, and we were all amazed!!! 50 years of teaching experience is a real treasure. I loved listening to his presentation!

There are many other things here that make me feel great, and one of them is that I really feel free, yes, that's the word, free!!!! It's a sensation I never had before. And I really feel like one more of the people here, because they are extremely hospitable. They are happy that I'm here, and this makes me feel immensely happy too.

María Pilar Lis / MIV volunteer from Spain in Kenya



**Marianist
International
Volunteers**

The MIV at the General Chapter of the Society of Mary

Thanks to an invitation from the brothers of the Marianist Family, the MIV has attended the 33rd General Chapter of the Society of Mary in Rome, Italy. The main reason for its presence was that the MIV Coordinator was invited to the Chapter as an oral translator in order to facilitate the communication

among the capitulants, who arrived in Rome from all over the world.

Nevertheless, the Coordinating Committee of the Chapter kindly gave the MIV a moment of its tight schedule so that its Coordinator could make a presentation about the MIV Mission, its challenges for the future, and who and what kind of mission the current MIV volunteers are carrying out in different



parts of the world.

The purpose of this presentation was to help the people attending the Chapter (both capitulants and auxiliary personnel) to later publicize in their respective Units the existence of the MIV as an official center that responds to the World Council of the Marianist Family, and that thanks to its mission, despite its limited budget and personnel, it has already helped several lay Marianists from different parts of the world (from the United States, Chile, Argentina, Malawi, Spain and France) who have collaborated or are now collaborating in different concrete missionary Marianist Works (in Peru, Bangladesh, Kenya and Togo). We count then on the collaboration of the Marianist brothers, and on their support and prayer, so they can make this volunteers' proposal known to the people in their respective Units who may be interested in joining this experience of Shared Mission coordinated by the MIV.

We really appreciate the unconditional support expressed by so many people at the Chapter to the MIV Mission. We will also accompany and support, with our mission and prayer, the new General Administration (Fr. Manolo, Fr. André, Bro. Ed and Br. José María), so they can guide and animate the Society of Mary in different parts of the world, sharing their life and mission with all those who share and live out the same Charism, within the Marianist Family, from all around the world.



Nick Raddell, American volunteer with the Marianist Program MVP

When we spoke with volunteer **Nick Raddell** he was just days away from the end of his volunteer experience with the Youth Build Program in San Antonio. Youth Build provides educational and vocational training for individuals working toward their GED. Nick said he has loved his time at Youth Build, which provided him the opportunity to share his passion for building things in a very “constructive” way.

How did you become involved with the MVP?

I was graduating in engineering from the University of Dayton, so I knew about the Marianists, and was trying to figure out what to do next— go to graduate school? work full-time? I thought about volunteering and prayed about it. It seemed like a great option to live out my faith and express what I believe in and to minister to the poor who hadn't received many opportunities in life. Plus it was an opportunity to travel, and I liked to work with my hands, so Youth Build was a great fit.

What do you do at Youth Build?

I am a construction aide, and I do anything and everything to help train the students to do construction. I also taught GED classes and helped plan and run the orientation programs. Youth Build really helps educate the full person, they provide training and have speakers come in. It empowers youth to make good decisions.

How do you feel about leaving?

I'm really going to miss it. It's a good opportunity to build relationships with students and staff. Everyone here has been

wonderful and very supportive of me. I'm not from San Antonio, and everyone made me feel very welcome. We have an all-star staff here, and I will really miss them and the students.

What surprised you about the experience?

Living in community with my two roommates, who are also volunteers, was a cool experience. We were dedicated to living in community and supporting each other. Living in this Christian environment, we really challenged each other to grow. It's a unique opportunity that most people will never experience.

How did you interact with the Marianist community in San Antonio?

They really welcomed us into their lives by having us over for dinner and barbeques and showing us around San Antonio. For someone who didn't know anyone in San Antonio, they really made it an easy, enjoyable experience for me.

What advice do you have for potential volunteers?

Find the right placement for you, and it's an amazing experience. It is a great opportunity to serve others and to learn to build friendships. If you have the opportunity to do it, jump on it!





**Marianist
International
Volunteers**

10 years later

In 1996 I became a member of the Marianist Voluntary Service Communities (MVSC). I'd decided to serve because during the two immediately preceding years I'd discovered that academia was decidedly not my *lugar en el mundo* (place in the world.) After a Marianist priest passed me an MVSC flier, I accepted the organization's invitation to "Take a Detour." I was sent to Cincinnati where I lived in the city's historic, and depressed, Over the Rhine neighborhood. For a year, I shared a community with a woman from England, a woman in her pre-college years from Toledo, Ohio, and a young man from the south. I worked for People Working Cooperatively (PWC), a nonprofit home repair group dedicated to helping keep low-income homeowners in safely in their homes.

Ten years later, I can say that my year was both one of the most challenging and rewarding of my life. The MVSC's commitment to simplicity taught me to focus on meeting needs over wants. Living in community I learned to deal with differences, disagreements, and disputes constructively. Serving at PWC not only gave me the opportunity to contribute to an organization that serves a vital need, but one that was also staffed by people whose skill and dedication were both exceptional.

Volunteering bore other fruits. During the year I formed a lasting friendship with a fellow volunteer who was from Argentina, José Luis Pérez, today the MIV Coordinator. That friendship, in large part, led me to begin studying Spanish, which led me to move to Argentina where I met my wife and will live for the foreseeable future. By taking a

detour with the MVSC, I found my way.

Keith Thomas / Former MVSC volunteer



The MIV offers the possibility to do voluntary service for a period of 6 months to a year or two, in the areas of pastoral work or ministry and in projects of human promotion and development, animated by the Marianist Family in different parts of the world, like the stories in this newsletter show us. For further information, contact the MIV coordinator, José Luis Pérez, at joseluisperez@sinectis.com.ar

