



BRIDGING BORDERS



Moran Memorial School students gain knowledge, skills and self-confidence that empower them to succeed and help their communities. *See story page 4*

‘EDUCATION GIVES GIRLS A VOICE’

Canadian Jesuits International (CJI) has invited Noluthando Honono to be the main speaker for its campaign this fall, which will focus on girls’ education in the Global South. *(See related story, page 6)*

A postgraduate law student in South Africa, Honono has been actively involved in campaigns in her country and in the African continent to ensure that girls

and women are not denied their right to education. Honono has participated in the Bakhita Partnership of Education launched by the Jesuit Justice and Ecology Network-Africa, and the student-led Right to Education campaign in South Africa.

CJI asked Honono some questions about the importance of girls’ education. Here are her reflections:

WHY IS GIRLS’ EDUCATION IMPORTANT?

Girls’ education is important in creating a well-rounded society. Girls need to have access to skillsets that are built within formal schools so that they can develop themselves and contribute to society. The independence of young women relies on them being able to use these skillsets to secure their own

YOUNG WOMEN SPEAK OUT ABOUT THEIR RIGHT TO BE EDUCATED

“It is my right to get an education.” With these words Sanju K.C. explained to me why education is important to her and why she spent three months gaining computer skills at Nepal Jesuit Social Institute (NJSI), a CJI partner, to better prepare for college. She is now a teacher at Don Bosco Catholic School in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Education is a human right. Yet it is a right that many people, especially girls in the Global South, do not have access to. Worldwide, between 129 to 130 million girls are out of school and denied their right to education. The impact of this on the social and economic wellbeing of communities and countries is significant. Education can transform a person’s life and it empowers marginalized communities. I witnessed this firsthand when CJI Program Coordinator Juan Emilio Hernandez and I visited our Jesuit partners in India and Nepal in the spring.

They considered getting an education to be crucial. Ritu Pana recalled the sacrifices that her parents made so that she and her siblings could go to school. “Our parents faced struggles, but they gave priority to our education, even if they had no food to eat,” says Pana, who works at the Human Life Development Research Centre (HLDRC), a project of the Jesuit Darjeeling Province in India. Today, she and her team are working hard to convince parents employed in tea plantations to send their children to HLDRC study centres, which offers free non-formal education for children. “We want to show them what is possible.”

This fall, CJI is launching a campaign on the right to education, with the theme: Education: Her Right, Our Future. It aims to raise awareness about the importance of education, particularly girls’ education, in determining our collective future.

It also seeks to address some of the obstacles. Sanju K.C. acknowledges that poverty stands in the way of education. She herself wants to obtain a master’s degree but is unable to do so because she supports her family. For now, she is trying to save whatever she can from her meagre salary.

In this newsletter we hear from our partners in Africa and Asia about the ways in which people they work with are denied the most basic right of education and why they have made education a priority for their work. We support them in their efforts as we cannot allow this injustice to continue.

We met many inspiring women, men, and children who are working to improve not just their lives, but also to serve their communities.



Juan Emilio Hernandez/CJI

The **vision** & **mission** of CJI

The **vision** of Canadian Jesuits International is a world of peace, justice and integrity of creation, transformed through active commitment and finding God in all things.

The **mission** of CJI is to love and to serve by working with people struggling for social justice and dignity in the world. Together with Jesuit and other partners, CJI responds in solidarity, through awareness-raising and advocacy in Canada and supporting partnerships in the Global South.

To learn more about Canadian Jesuits International or to make a donation, please contact us at:

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➔ 'Education gives girls a voice'

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economic freedom. This spares them from abuse in the name of being provided for. It is extremely important that they can provide for themselves and nurture generations that are just as self-sufficient. When young women can take care of themselves, they are less likely to be subject to forced marriages, female genital mutilation, sexual assaults, and advances in exchange for financial favours.

Beyond that, girls' education will help build communities that embrace the innovations of young women.


FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE, HOW DOES GIRLS' EDUCATION AFFECT THEIR AGENCY IN THE WORLD?

Being the oldest sibling has given me a significant amount of responsibility. Being equipped with education and being someone who used learned skillsets to develop myself has allowed me to meet those responsibilities in assisting my siblings in their own education.

Education allowed me to assist other young people in gaining access to institutions of higher learning. While I was in undergrad, I participated in the Right to Learn Campaign, which helped applicants get into universities.

Education gives young girls a voice that allows them to push those in positions of power to listen. It also allows them greater access to opportunities, economic and otherwise. It is, ultimately, the greatest key to agency.

Education is important, but opportunity is just as important.

 Noluthando
Honono



Submitted

Employment and other change-making opportunities must be made available to young women. These opportunities must amplify their voices and assist them in creating policies that speak to the challenges of young women.

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON BARRIERS TO GIRLS' EDUCATION?

Financial barriers and, probably most true for African nations, parents who never had access to education and therefore don't understand the value of education. South Africa has recurrent protests from university students who can't afford the prohibitive cost of education. In many parts of the continent, girls are forced into early marriage instead of being educated.

South Africa has made some strides in providing some access to opportunities for higher education. These include the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) which, for a category of students, is converted from a loan to a bursary. However, a significant portion of young people don't gain that access because they don't qualify under the set criteria even though affordability is the biggest issue for them.

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO OVERCOME THESE OBSTACLES? WHAT ROLE CAN CIVIL SOCIETY PLAY TO HELP ADDRESS THESE BARRIERS?

In terms of financial barriers, I believe civil society and governments need to band together to ensure quality education for all. There must be a policy and funding response to a lack of access due to money. There needs to be a concentrated effort at helping change cultures that make it hard for girls to get an education.

WHAT GIVES YOU HOPE THAT THESE BARRIERS CAN BE OVERCOME?

The campaigns and focus that have been put on education offer hope that all these initiatives will come to fruition and have a great impact on all people. Some of these include #FeesMustFall, a student-led protest movement in South Africa to stop fee increases and to change the function of the NSFAS to accommodate more students. There are also governments that actively push to have learners in school at primary and secondary levels, and NGOs that work in rural areas to provide education for the most underprivileged.

JESUIT SCHOOL PROMOTES EQUALITY IN AND THROUGH EDUCATION

Fr Nicholas Christuraj SJ is the director of Moran Memorial School.

When Jesuit-run Moran Memorial School (MMS) opened its doors in July 1999, it didn't have chairs and desks. The students sat on jute sacks spread on the earthen floor.

Today, our classrooms are equipped with furniture, and we have a library, simple science equipment, and a computer lab. The school can provide teacher orientation and training programs, thanks to organizations like Canadian Jesuits International (CJI), which in turn receives support from the Eyrie For The Children Foundation, and Canadian supporters.

In 2024, MMS will celebrate its silver jubilee. The journey has been one of ups and downs, struggles and successes, joys, and sorrows. But one thing has remained consistent: the school's value-based education to girls and boys from poor and marginalized communities in Nepal's easternmost Jhapa district.

For many years, the Jesuits were present in communities in the Kathmandu Valley, central Nepal. In the late 1990s, in line with the Jesuit's preferential option for the poor, a bold decision was made to move services from the centre to the periphery, where MMS is located today.

The school was established for children of tea workers in a neighbouring tea estate and children from the

Rajbanshi tribe who live in surrounding villages. They live tough lives – in overcrowded houses that are often without electricity and without a proper sewage system.

The school's goal is to build the confidence of students and to empower them so that they can help themselves and their communities. The communities we serve are often treated poorly by the upper caste; those who were not born in Nepal but have met the 15-year residency period are often denied citizenship when they submit their application to the government.

MMS began with 80 students, who found the formal structure of a classroom rather difficult. They faced the challenge of learning in Nepali and English, neither of which was their mother tongue. Initially, girls didn't even constitute half of the students. Girls have always been expected to help at home and in the fields. Today, more and more parents see the benefits of a formal education for both boys and girls, and the dropout rate has decreased. Girls now constitute 49% of the student population.

The school promotes equality and encourages everyone to continue their studies beyond high school. To further encourage girls' education, scholarships are awarded mostly to girl students whose families experience financial constraints. It costs about \$300 to educate a student for one year. Most tea estate workers cannot afford to pay full school fees, but contribute a day's wage per month, about \$3.77 for a backbreaking eight-hour shift picking tea leaves.

To provide basic education to the students, the school must make up the difference. Last year, over 60 students were able to continue their studies thanks to scholarships provided by CJI and the Eyrie For The Children Foundation. MMS alumni often visit the school to express their gratitude for the education they have received. Many have been admitted to schools of higher education, while others have found employment abroad. Our hope is that these success stories will continue for many jubilees to come and inspire the communities that we serve.

📷 Girls comprise 49% of the student population at Moran Memorial School.



EDUCATION AN UPHILL BATTLE FOR GIRLS IN SOUTH SUDAN

Fr Kizito Busobozi SJ is the Deputy Principal at Mazzolari Teachers Training College.

One day, an angry parent came to the primary school that we started at Mazzolari Teachers Training College in South Sudan. He wanted to withdraw his daughter from our school after having been brought there by her mother. “Education spoils girls,” he said. This is the mentality that we’re up against.

South Sudan has the lowest literacy rate in sub-Saharan Africa (27%), and girls suffer the most. More than 70% of its population above the age of 15 is illiterate, and majority of them are women, according to UNESCO.

Cultural norms that push early marriage present a challenge, especially in the greater *Bahr el Ghazal* region, among ethnic groups who are pastoralists. Women and girls are valued in terms of how much bride price (number of cows) they can fetch for their families.

Poverty and a lack of public investment in education hinder education in general. South Sudan gained independence in 2011; it remains politically and economically unstable and has not established a proper education system. The church helps fill the gap by offering education, especially to the poor and marginalized.

In 2014, the Catholic Diocese of Rumbek invited the Jesuits of Eastern Africa Province to establish a teacher training college in Cueibet county. They would run a two-year pre-service program, with trainees who have completed secondary school. The college was called Mazzolari Teachers Training College (MTTC), after the late Bishop Cesare Mazzolari, who proposed its creation.

But MTTC couldn’t get students qualified enough to be trained as teachers; their educational foundation was weak. A proposal was made to train teachers in primary schools who had no professional certificate. They were not qualified either.

The Jesuits decided to start a primary and secondary school to provide quality education for boys and girls, and in time, teachers could be raised from their ranks. MTTC currently has 25 students in the two-year

pre-service program (15 female), and 65 in the in-service program (25 female). Fifty-nine students have graduated from the pre-service program, and 14 work as teachers and headmasters.

Encouraging parents to educate their children, especially girls, remains an uphill battle. By the time the girls are 14, their families want to see them married off. Parents often neglect to pay their tuition or provide them with hygiene supplies. Students have approached teachers with requests for sanitary pads so they could go to school during their menstrual period. This neglect is often designed to force girls to drop out of school. Families also rely on girls to fetch firewood and water, to cook, and babysit their siblings, leaving them no time to study. This leads to poor performance and creates an excuse to remove them from school.

When school fees go unpaid, it becomes difficult to pay teachers and to feed the students. The school is forced to end classes earlier than usual.

The Jesuits and laypeople who work with us encourage girls to stay focused and rise above their challenges. We do so through homilies, lectures in classrooms, seminars, and even one-on-one exchanges.

The support that we receive from Canadian Jesuits International and other members of the Xavier Network is therefore crucial.

 Students prepare to become teachers in Cueibet county.



MTTC

CJI's 2023 FALL CAMPAIGN


The Fall education and advocacy campaign of Canadian Jesuits International (CJI) will focus on girls' education with the theme, Education: Her Right, Our Future.

Education is a human right that continues to be denied to many people in the Global South, particularly girls. In the wake of COVID-19, girls' enrollment in school has dropped significantly due to barriers such as poverty, early marriage, unsafe hygiene facilities, and domestic and childcare work.

The right to education is central to human dignity and is a key factor for the success of all our futures. In the words of Sanju K.C., a young woman completing an internship at the Nepal Jesuit Social Centre, a CJI partner, "If we don't have an education, we are like blind people walking on the road... People think you should stop studying to get married. But it is my right to get an education." Girls' education strengthens economies and reduces inequality, according to UNESCO. It contributes to more stable, resilient societies that give all individuals – including boys and men – the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Photo: Fe y Alegría



 The fall education and advocacy campaign will focus on girls' education.

Universal quality education is goal #4 of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Increased investment in girls' education across all levels of governments, NGOs, churches, and communities is crucial. Girls' education intersects with issues around sustainable development, the global climate emergency and growing humanitarian crises.

Join us for public events CJI is hosting in Winnipeg, Ottawa, Toronto, Guelph, or online. As part of this campaign, CJI will also seek support for its projects that focus on girls' education to help them build a better future. To view a list of these projects and to donate please visit our website,

 canadianjesuitsinternational.ca

For more information on our campaign and to register for any of the speaking events:

 canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/fall-campaign-2023/

OUR GUEST SPEAKER:

Noluthando Honono is a postgraduate law student at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. She was a guest speaker at the Jesuit-sponsored Bakhita Partnership for Education (BPE) conference last May in Zambia. Launched by the Jesuit Justice and Ecology Network-Africa in 2020, BPE works to ensure that girls receive a quality education that will enable them to earn a living wage and build a secure future. Honono also participated in the student-led Right to Learn Campaign in South Africa, which seeks to ensure access to education for working class communities. She is currently conducting research on the impact of COVID-19 on students, particularly girls, and developing a proposal for a "return-to school" program in South Africa.



Honono will be the main speaker at CJI's 3rd Youth for Others Advocacy Symposium scheduled November 15-17, 2023, Saint Paul University in Ottawa.


CJI STAFF WITNESS IMPACT OF PROJECTS IN INDIA AND NEPAL

Canadian Jesuit International's (CJI) visit to India and Nepal last spring was "an extraordinary opportunity to meet some of CJI key partners and to witness the real impact" of the contributions made by CJI supporters in Canada, said CJI International Programs Coordinator Juan Emilio Hernandez.

"The impact goes beyond the individuals, as all projects have a multiplier effect," said CJI Executive Director Jenny Cafiso, who accompanied Hernandez in the visit. "We were able to hear from the community members themselves how the various initiatives supported by CJI are having an impact on the lives of individuals and communities."

Women leaders in a slum "have been able to pressure the local government to provide basic needs like streetlights or a community clinic for their neighbourhood," said Cafiso. "Students from very marginalized communities have been able to access higher education thanks to good, quality education provided by the Jesuit schools."


Hernandez and Cafiso visited CJI's Jesuit partners and other Jesuit institutions in India and Nepal from April 11 to May 1. They traveled to New Delhi, Bagdogra, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong, Kathmandu, Sadakbari, and Simalbari.

 A wave and a smile from students at a school supported by the Nepal Jesuit Social Institute (NJSI), a CJI partner in Nepal.



Jenny Cafiso/CJI



 Tea garden workers share their experiences of working with the Human Life Research and Development Centre, a CJI partner in India.

The last time CJI's staff visited India and Nepal was in 2016. The support that Canadians give to these projects is crucial, said Cafiso. "The projects we support may be small, but they are an important response to a situation where millions of people in the country suffer from exclusion, discrimination and lack the most basic necessities," she said. "By making an option to work with the poorest members of society, the Jesuit projects supported by CJI often provide the only option for a different life where they can develop their full human potential."

During their visit, Cafiso and Hernandez met with representatives from the New Delhi Indian Social Institute, Lok Manch, the Human Life Research and Development Centre, Gandhi Ashram, Hayden Hall, the St Alphonsus Social and Agricultural Center, the Society of Jesus Agricultural and Social Institute, and Moran Memorial School, and visited local Jesuit schools and institutions. They also met with the Provincial and Regional Superior of Darjeeling and Nepal Region, respectively, as well as officials from the Jesuit Conference of South Asia.

Read more stories and watch videos about the trip:

 <https://bit.ly/IndiaNepalvisit>

Juan Emilio Hernandez/CJI



Paige Hill

CJI's FRIENDS SPEAK: A PASSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Paige Hill is headed to York University next year. She volunteered to help with past CJI events and was the organization's intern this summer.

I have always felt passionate about social change and equality. Growing up in an age of social media has made me constantly aware of global issues. This can cause despair, but it can also drive positive change. The hardest part of creating change is knowing where to start. That is where organizations like Canadian Jesuits International (CJI) come in. Through my involvement in leadership and advocacy in high school, I have worked

BR PAUL DESMARAIS SJ

With deep sadness, Canadian Jesuits International (CJI) shares news that Br Paul Desmarais SJ passed away on August 16, 2023. He was 78.

Friends and supporters of CJI will remember Br Paul for his transformative work at the Jesuit-run Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre (KATC) in Zambia, where he spent 40 years as director, and later, as director of its diploma program on organic agriculture. Read more, including how you can help to ensure that his legacy lives on:

<https://bit.ly/45mKTpw>



KATC

SUPPORT CJI'S SUDAN HUMANITARIAN APPEAL

<https://bit.ly/3MwzKdU>

with CJI on several occasions. Its mission to love and serve by working for social justice aligns with my values. The work of CJI's partners in the Global South and our advocacy efforts in Canada makes me hopeful for the future of our world and of my generation.

Happy one-year work anniversary to CJI's Communications Coordinator, Tess Sison! See full story:

canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/celebrating-one-year-at-cji/

SUPPORT GIRLS' ACCESS TO EDUCATION NOW

Access to education is something we take for granted. Others cannot. Try to **imagine if you**, your daughters, or women you know **were denied schooling** simply because **they were female**.

Please give to Canadian Jesuits International and **help girls** in the Global South **access quality education**.

Thank you for **making a difference** in the lives of vulnerable **women** and **children**.

For more details:

canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/fundraising

To donate or to get more information, please:

Visit:

canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/fundraising

Write to:

Canadian Jesuits International
70 Saint Mary Street, Toronto, ON M5S 1J3

Call: **1-800-448-2148** – Email: cji@jesuits.ca

THANK YOU!