

Don Bosco International

Don Bosco International (DBI) is a non-governmental organisation based in Brussels, representing the Salesians of Don Bosco to the institutions of the European Union, with a focus on the protection of children's rights, youth development, and education. Founded in 2014, DBI collaborates with various European partners to promote inclusive social and educational policies, paying attention to vulnerable individuals. The organisation promotes youth participation in policy-making, emphasising the importance of informal education. Through networking and advocacy activities, DBI aims to create synergies with European institutions, civil society organisations, and Salesian networks globally. The guiding values are solidarity, the integral formation of young people and intercultural dialogue. DBI organises seminars, conferences, and European projects aimed at ensuring greater youth presence in decision-making processes, fostering an inclusive environment that supports them in their journey of growth, autonomy and spiritual development, through cultural and educational exchanges. The Executive Secretary, Sara Sechi, explains the activities of this institution.

Advocacy as an act of responsibility for and with our youth

Don Bosco International (DBI) is the organisation that manages the institutional representation of the Salesians of Don Bosco to the European institutions and civil society organisations that revolve around them. DBI's mission is centred on *advocacy*, which can be translated as "political influence", meaning all those actions aimed at influencing a decision-making-legislative process, in our case the European one. The DBI office is based in Brussels and is hosted by the Salesian community of Woluwe-Saint-Lambert (FRB Province). Working in the European capital is dynamic and stimulating. Nevertheless, the proximity of the community allows us to keep the Salesian charism alive in our mission, avoiding getting

trapped in the so-called “European bubble”, that world of ‘privileged’ relationships and dynamics often distant from our realities.

DBI’s action follows two directions: on the one hand, bringing the Salesian educational-pastoral mission closer to the institutions through the sharing of good practices, youth requests, projects and related results, creating spaces for dialogue and participation for those who traditionally would not have access to them. On the other hand, they deal with bringing the European dimension within the Congregation through monitoring and information on ongoing processes and new initiatives, facilitating new contacts with institutional representatives, NGOs and confessional organisations that can give rise to new collaborations.

A question that often arises spontaneously is how DBI manages to concretely create political influence. In *advocacy* actions, networking with other organisations or entities that share principles, values, and objectives is fundamental. In this regard, DBI ensures an active presence in alliances, formal and informal, of NGOs or confessional actors who work together on issues dear to Don Bosco’s mission: the fight against poverty and social inclusion, the defence of the rights of young people, especially those in vulnerable situations, and integral human development. Whenever a Salesian delegation visits Brussels, we facilitate meetings for them with Members of the European Parliament, Commission officials, diplomatic corps, including the Apostolic Nunciature to the European Union, and other actors of interest. We often manage to meet groups of young people and students from Salesian schools who visit the city, organising a moment of dialogue for them with other youth organisations.

DBI is a service that the Congregation offers to give visibility to its works and bring the voice of those who would otherwise not be heard to institutional forums. The Salesian Congregation has a potential for *advocacy* that is not fully expressed. The presence in 137 countries to protect young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion

represents an educational and social network that few organisations can count on. However, it is still difficult to strategically present good results at decision-making tables, where policies and investments are outlined, especially at the international level. For this reason, ensuring a constant dialogue with the institutions represents both an opportunity and an act of responsibility. It is an opportunity because in the long term visibility facilitates contacts, new partnerships, funding for projects and the sustainability of the works. It is also a responsibility because, not being able to remain silent in the face of the difficulties faced by our boys and girls in today's world, political influence is the active testimony of that civic commitment that we often try to generate in young people.

By guaranteeing rights and dignity for young people, Don Bosco was the first actor of political influence of the Congregation, for example through the signing of the first Italian apprenticeship contract. *Advocacy* represents an intrinsic element of the Salesian mission. Salesians do not lack experience, nor success stories, nor concrete and innovative alternatives to face current challenges, but often a cohesion that allows for coordinated networking and clear and shared communication. By giving voice to the authentic testimonies of young people, we can transform challenges into opportunities, creating a lasting impact in society that gives hope for the future.

Sara Sechi

Don Bosco International – DBI, Brussels

Sara Sechi, Executive Secretary of DBI, has been in Brussels for two and a half years. She is the daughter of the Erasmus+ generation, which together with other European programmes has guaranteed her life and training experiences that would otherwise have been denied. She is very grateful to Don Bosco and the Salesian Congregation, where she has found meritocracy, growth, and a second family. And we wish her good

and fruitful work for the cause of young people.

The Salesian presence in Ethiopia and Eritrea

The Salesian mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea had its beginnings in 1975, when the first three Salesians –from Ireland Fr Patrick Morrin, from USA Bro. Joseph Reza and from Italy Bro. Cesare Bullo – arrived in Mekele (Tigray-Ethiopia). Under the guidance of the Middle East (MOR) Province, they responded to the Congregation's call to explore new frontiers. Later, in 1982, other missionaries from the Lombardo-Emiliana Province (ILE) arrived in Dilla as part of *Project Africa*. The Salesian presence in Eritrea began in Dekemhare in 1995. In 1998, the communities of the two provinces united to form the Mariam Kidane Meheret Vice-Province (AET).

In October 2025 we will celebrate fifty (50) years of presence (Golden Jubilee). It is the time to thank the Lord and praise him, and to remember and thank those who have made the blessing of Salesian Charism reality for the young people of Ethiopia and Eritrea. Special thanks goes to all the missionaries and all the benefactors, may God bless you abundantly.

When God wants to bless His people, he makes use of other people. When he wanted to bless all his people he called Abraham: *"and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice"* (Genesis 22:18), when He wanted to free his people from slavery he called Moses (Exodus 3), and when he wanted to remind his people of his love he called prophets. And in our

time God has spoken through his Son: *“but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds”* (Hebrews 1:2). His love is revealed to us through the incarnation of the Second Person of the most Holy Trinity – the Word of God became flesh (cf. John 1:14) comes to show us how much God loves us: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life”* (John 3:16).

And when he wanted to bless Ethiopian and Eritrean young people through the Charism of the Salesians he inspired the late bishop of the Adigrat Eparchy Bishop Abune Hailemariam Kahsay who asked the Salesians to come to his Eparchy and offer holistic education to young people. If we say yes to the Lord to collaborate with him in blessing his people, we need to be consistent, persevering and take commitment to try to understand his plan and his time, as well as to make our contribution. Since the answer of the Salesians was late in coming he asked three of his priests who were studying in Italy to become Salesians, and in this way to start the Salesian presence in Ethiopia. One of those three – Abba Sebhatleab Worku – after becoming a Salesian, was teaching philosophy in Lebanon, while following his initial formation – and was appointed as bishop of the Adigrat Eparchy succeeding Abune Hailemariam Kahsay. As the Word of God says *“Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit”* (John 12:24). The fruit did not come when Abune Hailemariam was alive but the seed with which he collaborated to sow gave fruit after his death. Then Abba Sebhatleab Worku made his final profession before being consecrated bishop, and he was able to welcome the first Salesians on 17 October 1975 in Mekele. From then on it spread to different parts of Ethiopia (Adigrat, Adwa, Shire, Dilla, Soddo, Adamitullu, Zway, Debrezeit, Addis Abeba, Gambella) and in Eritrea (Dekemhare, Asmara and Barentu).

There are sixteen presences (13 communities in Ethiopia, two communities and one presence in Eritrea). In Ethiopia we are running Six (6) Technical Institutes, Eight (8) Primary Schools, Five (5) Secondary Schools, thirteen (13) Oratory/Youth Centers, one (1) home for Children at Risk, Five (5) Parishes, three (3) Aspirantates, formation houses for the novices and postnovices.

Geographically Ethiopia is located in East Africa (Horn of Africa) bordering with Kenya, Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Sudan and South Sudan. It is one of the ancient countries (sometimes called Aksumite Kingdom). In history it developed but through lack of continuity and conflict, much of the past has been destroyed and it is trying to start anew, instead of building on what was already begun, causing the country to remain as one of under-developed countries.

In just the last fifty years of Salesian presence, we have seen three bloody wars: 1974-1991 – seventeen (17) years of civil war to overthrow the dictator and to build a democratic government; 1998-2000 two years of bloody war with the excuse of a “border” conflict with Eritrea. In 2020, a conflict broke out between the Federal Government and its allies and the Tigray Region; although it apparently ended in 2022 with the Pretoria Agreement, the war continued between the Federal Government and the Amhara Region and is still ongoing. Moreover, conflicts that began years ago in the Oromia region – one of Ethiopia’s largest regions – continue to persist.

War consumes immense human and material resources, destroys infrastructure and human relations, and hampers investment and tourism. We witness these effects in our own countries and in many parts of the world.

As Salesians, we believe that the only way out from conflicts and war, from poverty and lack of peace is through education and we have continued within the war and conflict giving education for the poor young people to build their future and

their peaceful co-existence. Practising the Salesian preventive system: being with the young, being interested in their life and with a readiness to listen to them and to dialogue with them, trying to give them the values of *Religion, being reasonable with them, and starting everything by loving them* makes it possible for us to educate them.

Throughout our fifty year journey we have faced political (lack of stability and wars), social, economic challenges. Nowadays the main challenge is political instability and the issue of resources (human and financial). Following the directions of the General Chapters, we have sought to work together with lay people, and even though we have made progress, there is still a long way to go. The work with the Salesian Family is also another challenge that needs to be addressed. We are so grateful for the provinces who have contributed to the foundation and growth of the Salesian presence in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

We are still in an emergency situation following the war and lack of stability, because there are many Internally Displaced People in the camps – in schools (many government schools are not providing education for students) in Tigray. Our schools are accommodating students from among Internally Displaced People (IDPs), and these students and their families are still in need of daily food. We intervene when we can – thanks to the help that comes from the Don Bosco network and from other benefactors, and the students are fully dependent on us for all school materials.

For religious life we face a lack of prepared formation guides. Even though there are still vocations, our capacity to take care of them is difficult, considering the times we are living in. We need more prepared personnel.

There are one hundred and four (104) Salesians in Ethiopia and Eritrea including those who are in initial formation. The majority are local vocations already holding responsibility

which shows that the foundation is established. The Vice-Province (AET) has three main priorities – *Salesian Charismatic Religious Identity, Youth Ministry involving the lay people, and Self-sustainability.*

And we hope that slowly we will learn from our own history and make an effort to live together in harmony so that the mission moves smoothly towards the young people who are in need, and make a good contribution to the education and growth of the young – *Good Believers and Upright Citizens.*

Together with our benefactor and all collaborators, we are committed to continuing to journey with the young people to work for a better society and the Church!

Fr Hailemariam Medhin, sdb
Superior of the AET Vice-Province

“I want to be useful to my people”. Lessons of life in missionary Africa

In 1995, 28 years ago, I left my beloved Argentina for missionary Africa with the same ideal as Zeffirino Namuncurà: to become a Salesian and a priest “useful to my people” in my beloved Africa.

And here I am, sitting under a noble, 100-year-old African tree, with a temperature of 36 degrees and 70% humidity, reflecting on my missionary life. From here I contemplate the beautiful rainforest painted in a thousand shades of infinite green, overflowing with life, full of mysteries and a thousand questions waiting to be answered. A true multicoloured mural

like my missionary life: drawn in a thousand colours, painted in different shades and tones, blessed by challenges and rewards, by projects and dreams, by brushstrokes of light to shade the darker and more difficult tones of the mission.

First steps

My first steps in Africa were steps of discovery and reverence. I said to myself, "Africa is rich!" and, like a teenager, I fell in love with it at first sight... I fell in love with the diversity of its landscapes and exuberant geography, its fauna and flora, its seas and jungles, its immense savannahs and deserts. It is rich in natural resources: gold, diamonds, oil, uranium, timber, agriculture and fisheries. I realised immediately that Africa is not poor, but it is very badly managed. I fell in love with its cultures, languages, colours, smells and tastes. I was captivated by their rhythms, their music, the vibration of their eardrums, the sound of their musical instruments, their songs and dances full of life. And above all, I fell in love with its people and its young people, because this is certainly its greatest wealth: its children, its young people who represent the present and the future of the continent of hope.

Missionary temptation

When you are young, inexperienced, and you arrive in mission land with a thousand expectations and a heart full of dreams, the first temptation is to think that you are coming to "save", that you are an "envoy", called to "change the world", to "transform", to "teach", to "evangelise", to "heal". It is there that your promised land teaches you the value of humility. And your people teach you that, to be a missionary, you must make yourself as small as a child, you must be born again: you must learn to speak new languages, to understand new and different customs, to change lifestyles, ways of thinking and feeling. In the mission you learn to keep quiet, to receive corrections, to accept humiliation and to suffer

culture shocks. The true missionary unlearns in order to learn anew, until arriving at the most beautiful discovery: it is your people who “educate” you, “evangelise” you, “transform” you, “heal” you. They become your “Kairos”, your “time of God”, they are the “theological place” where God manifests himself to you and finally “saves” you.

African lessons

From the southern hemisphere, Africa has much to teach the Christian and “developed” West and the North. Here are some lessons I learnt in Africa.

The first lesson is “Ubuntu”: “I am, because we are”.

Africans love family, community, working and celebrating together. They are deeply generous and caring, always ready to lend a hand to anyone in need. They know that the individualist dies in isolation. African wisdom confirms this: “If you walk alone, you go faster, but if you walk in a group, you go further.” “It takes three stones to keep the pot on the fire.” “The tree that is alone withers; the tree that is in the forest lives.”. “It takes a whole village to raise a child.” And in the same vein: “It takes a whole village to kill a rabid dog.” “If two elephants fight, it is the grass that loses.” Fraternal life and community keep the family, clan and tribe alive.

The second is respect for life and elders

A son or daughter is always a blessing from heaven, a joy for the whole family, and hands to work the land and harvest. Life is a gift from God. That is why it is said “where there is life, there is hope” and “protecting the seed protects the harvest.” And because life expectancy is low, the elderly are valued, loved and “cared for”. There are no nursing homes or old people’s homes here. Grandparents are the heritage of the village. Children sit around the elders to listen to ancestral stories and the wisdom of the ancestors. That is why we say here that “when an elder dies, it is like burning down a library” and “if you forget your elders, you forget your

shadow.”

The third is about suffering and resilience

African wisdom says that “pain is a silent host” and states that “through suffering one acquires wisdom.” That is why it is said that “patience is the medicine for all pain.” They turn obstacles into opportunities. They are not afraid of sacrifice or death. For them, losing a crop, a material good, a loved one, is an opportunity to start again, to create something new. They know that nothing is achieved without effort and sacrifice; that the only way to succeed is to enter through the narrow door and they bless God who gives and takes away at the same time.

A fourth lesson concerns spirituality and prayer

Africans are ‘spiritual’ by nature. They are willing to give their lives for what they believe in. God is omnipresent in their lives, in their history, in their speeches, in their celebrations. Every activity begins with a prayer and ends with a prayer. That is why their proverbs say: “When you pray, move your feet” “don’t look to God only when you are in trouble” and “where there is prayer, there is hope.” If one does not pray, life becomes bland and sterile. They pray as if “everything depends on God, knowing that in the end everything depends on them”, as a great African saint would say.

In my missionary life, I am mission

In three decades, we have built schools and vocational training centres, built churches and shrines, chapels and community centres, done emergency interventions during the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia, opened homes for child soldiers, helped Ebola orphans, provided care for street children or girls in prostitution. But these activities are not identified with mission. The fruits of missionary activity are measured in terms of life transformation. And in this sense I confess that I have seen miracles: I have seen child soldiers rebuild their lives, I have seen street children become lawyers at university, I have seen them smile again and

go back to school, I have seen girls in prostitution return to their families, learn a trade and start again.

As Pope Francis says, “we don’t have a mission, or do mission” We are mission. I am the mission. My mission is to be the “sacrament of God’s love” for the most vulnerable. That is, that they, through my hands, my eyes, my ears, my legs, my heart, can experience that God loves them madly, that he gives them life, through my life given to them. This is what being a Salesian missionary means to me. That is why I am mission when I kneel before the Eucharist asking for their salvation; I am mission when I am in the courtyard or at home accompanying the children, I am mission when I travel to the most distant and dangerous areas, I am mission when I celebrate the Eucharist, hear confessions or baptise. I am on mission when I sit down to read or study thinking about them. I am on mission when I put together a strategic plan with my brothers and sisters or write a project to improve the quality of life of my people. I am on mission when I build a school or a chapel. I am on mission when I share my life with you who are reading this.

We are all missionaries by vocation

Dear friends, through baptism we are all called to be missionaries, to be mission. We do not have to go to Africa to be missionaries. The missionary call is an inner call to leave everything, to give everything where God has planted us. Not to give things, but to “give myself”, to “share” my time, my talents, my faith, my professionalism, my love, my service with the most vulnerable. If you hear this call, do not put it off. The charity of Christ and the urgency of the Kingdom are calling you.

Fr Jorge Mario CRISAFULLI, sdb, Provincial Africa Niger Niger

South Asia. Don Bosco among the young

Living today don Bosco's mission to the young especially those who are resource-poor in South Asia

The Lord made clear to Don Bosco that he was to direct his mission first and foremost to the young, especially to those who are poorer. This mission to the young, especially the poorer ones became the reason for the existence of the Salesian Congregation.

Like our Father Don Bosco, every Salesian says to God on the day of his religious profession: "I offer myself totally to you. I pledge myself to devote all my strength to those to whom you will send me, especially to young people who are poorer". Every Salesian collaborator is committed to this same mission.

The latest General Chapter of the Congregation made renewed call for absolute priority to be given to the poorest, most abandoned and defenceless.

When I was given the opportunity to submit an article for the Salesian Bulletin, my thoughts immediately went to what I consider to be one of the largest interventions on behalf of the poorer youth in the South Asia Region of the Salesian Congregation, namely, preparing poor young people for employment through short-term skills training. After the 28th General Chapter, the South Asia Region made a choice to help young people remove abject poverty from their families. But before I present that, let me present to you the South Asia Region of the Salesian Congregation.

The South Asia Region comprises all Salesian works in India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Kuwait and UAE. There are 11 Provinces and 1 Vice Province. With more than 3.000 professed

Salesians the South Asia Region accounts for 21.5% of Salesians in the world working in 413 Salesian Religious Houses, accounting for 23.8% of Salesian Houses in the Congregation. The median age of confreres is 45. It is providential that so many Salesians are working in the region that has the largest populations of youth and poor youth in the world.

The Salesian Family in the Region comprises in addition to the Salesians, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (1.789), Association of the Salesian Co-operators (3.652), World Confederation of the Past Pupils (34.091), Secular Institute of the Volunteers of Don Bosco (15), Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians (915), Association of Mary Help of Christians (905), Catechist Sisters of Mary Immaculate Help of Christians (748), The Disciples – Don Bosco Secular Institute (317), Sisters of Maria Auxiliatrix (102), and Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco (109).

The works of the Salesians in collaboration with other members of the Salesian Family and other Religious and laity reach out to over 21.170.893 beneficiaries. A variety of works (formal and non-formal technical education, works for youth at risk (YaR), Schools, Higher Education, Parishes, Youth Centres, Oratories Social work etc) are directed to serving the beneficiaries. The other Salesian Family members have independent works that reach out to many more.

The world, under the leadership of the United Nations has set the goal to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere” as the first of its Sustainable development Goals. The Salesian works achieve these goals in manifold ways, but one prominent work among them is short term skill training offered to poor youth who are then helped to get employed and earn a living to be the protagonists who bring their families out of poverty.

The Salesian Provincial Conference of South Asia (SPCSA) set

up Don Bosco Tech (DBTech) as a vehicle to coordinate the efforts of all Salesian Provinces in this area of work. Established in 2006, the DBTech model and its name has been imitated in other parts of the world. In these years the network (DBTech India) has trained over 440.000 young people. The work is done through the various Salesian institutions as well as through a large network of collaborative work with other Diocesan and Religious Congregations and with a large pool of highly motivated lay collaborators who are committed to working for the poorer section of youth.

While the achievements over the years on behalf of the poorest youth, has been great, I would like to point to the achievements of 2022-2023 to appreciate the work of all Salesians and their collaborators to carry on the dream of Don Bosco to dedicate ourselves to young people especially those who are poorer.

I have chosen this work to be presented since it above all achieves the largest and best outcome for the poorest families.

Here we have a network with 26.243 students being trained in one year! Very few large institutions in the world would have so many students graduating (20.121) in one year. Even if they had, the graduates would rarely be in such numbers from the poorest sections of society.

Of these approximately 18.370 are employed as they finish their skills training (approximately 70% of those trained).

All these students have been given totally free training and job placement without charging fees. This is achieved through the generous contribution of benefactors and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) partners. DBTech has over 30 funding partners including Corporates, Foundations and Government.

The Salesian predilection for poorer youth is evidenced in the fact that almost all the trainees come from the "Economically

Weaker Sections” of society – 98%.

Even more important to note is that 10.987 (55%) of the already graduated 20.121 students (others being in training, awaiting conclusion of their classes) are coming from families who have an annual income less than Rs.100.000, that is approximately 1.111 Euro per year (calculated at 1 Euro = Rs.90). This is family income less than 100 Euro per month. This would mean families living on less than 3 Euro per day. We are speaking of families and not individuals!

<i>Annual Family Income</i>	<i>Approximate Daily Income of Families</i>	<i>Total Youth Trained</i>	<i>% of Youth Trained</i>
Below 1 Lakh / Below 1.111 Euro	Below 3 Euro	10.987	55%
1-3 Lakh	Below 3-9 Euro	8.144	40%
3-5 Lakh	Below 9-15 Euro	469	2%
5-7 Lakh	Below 15-21 Euro	161	1%
7 Lakh and above	21 Euro and more	360	2%
Grand Total		20.121 (+ 6.302 in class)	

Note: Euro calculated to be 1 = Rs.90

Dopo la formazione gratuita, questi giovani poveri guadagnano oggi in media 10.000 rupie al mese, il che ha reso il loro reddito personale annuo superiore al reddito familiare annuo delle loro famiglie.

After free skill training, these poor youth are today earning an average of Rs.10.000 per month which has made their personal annual income above the annual family income of their own families.

In the context of the need for outcome based transformative

interventions, the Salesian Family of South Asia with the primary role played by the young people who get skilled and employed are truly forming “honest citizens”. The young people who have been trained and placed in jobs are today contributing to nation building. The annual income generated by these students employed after free training is approximately Rs. 2.204.400.000 which is equivalent to approximately 24.493.333 Euros annually.

The training duration varies according to sectors. The trainings are provided in various sectors: Agriculture and Allied; Apparel, Made Ups and Home Furnishing; Automotive; Banking and Finance; Beauty & Wellness; Capital Goods; Construction; Electronics & IT Hardware; Food Processing; Furniture & Fittings; Green Jobs; Handicrafts and Carpet; Healthcare; IT-ITES; Logistics; Media and Entertainment; Office Management; Plumbing Industry; Power; Retail; Tourism and Hospitality and, Others.

It is also to be noted that in developing nations where girls and women are the weaker and more defenceless, the services offered by the Salesians are serving the females more. More than 53% of the trainees who completed their course are female.



Le storie dei giovani che hanno trasformato la loro vita cogliendo le opportunità offerte dalle opere salesiane sono molto importanti nella narrazione dell'attenzione salesiana verso i più poveri.

The stories of the youth who have transformed their lives through taking the opportunities provided by the Salesian works stand tall in the narrative of Salesian focus on the poorest.

The Salesians have truly received support from many generous people, foundations, corporations and government to achieve

the transformation of so many underprivileged youths to become honest and productive citizens. We are truly grateful to all of them. God has been blessing the Region with growth in Salesian Vocations too.

For more information, one could visit the website of DBTech India at <https://dbtech.in>.

Such work, as Don Bosco would tell us, is “our greatest satisfaction”! It is addressed to the poorest. It involves largescale collaboration between Religious and Secular bodies. It is a great example of lay collaboration. It is addressed to all youth – 72% of the beneficiary youth belong to Hindu religion which is the largest religion in the South Asia Region.

In the *Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco* we read Don Bosco’s words: “Make sure you always stick to the poor children of the people. Do not fail in your prime purpose and let your society always have it in view: do not aspire to greater things. [...] If you educate the poor, if you are poor, if you do not make noise, no one will envy you, no one will seek you out, they will leave you alone and you will do good.” (MB IX,566).

We also present some young people whose encounter with Don Bosco’s charism has changed their lives.

Adna Javaid

Adna Javaid’s struggles began at a very young age. She grew up in poverty. She was born in Bemina, a region in the heart of Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, India. Adna’s father Javaid Ahmad Bhat was a shopkeeper who could hardly support his family. She dropped her studies after completing 12th grade and remained in her home for some years. She wanted to chase her dreams, but could not find a way to fulfil them.

Despite her difficult circumstances, she began writing plays and performing them in small venues in her locality. However, her early efforts were unsuccessful, and she faced rejection after rejection. In 2021, Adna staged her first play, "I Know I've Been a Girl," in her community. The play was poorly received, and Adna lost all of her savings. However, she continued to have faith and slowly built up her future.

During the Don Bosco Tech Srinagar mobilization near her locality, Adna saw the Don Bosco Tech team and spoke to them about her problems. The team convinced her to join the training and assured job assistance, and she decided to join the CRM Domestic Voice Domain.



Adna's breakthrough came in 2021 when she realized that she was closer to her dreams after training at Don Bosco Tech Training Centre Srinagar.

Since then, Adna has become one of the most successful and influential figures in the BPO sector. Despite facing significant obstacles and setbacks, she persevered, continued to work hard, and believed in herself and her vision.

She is now working as a Customer Care Executive Process, at J&K Bank, supported by DigiTech, Call System Pvt. Ltd, with Rs 12,101 CTC monthly remuneration.

Adna is so happy about her life now, and she is also helping many girls to join the job-oriented course at Don Bosco Tech Training Centre, Rajbagh, Srinagar.

Peesara Niharika

Peesara Niharika hails from a rural place located far away from Don Bosco Tech, Karunapuram center. She completed her graduation with the support of her parents, who are daily wage workers. Difficulties and shortcomings were the watchwords in her life from a very young age. At a point in life, she even

dropped her studies and supported her parents financially, by working in agri-farms with the villagers. But she longed to pursue higher studies, whenever she watched her school friends go to college, while she was working in the paddy field.

One day, as she was looking for an employment opportunity, Niharika came across the mobilization wing at Karnuapuram, organized by the staff of Don Bosco Tech Centre and made a firm decision to enrol herself in the Skill Training Program. Having an interest in Customer Relationship Management, she got herself enrolled in the CRM Domestic Non-Voice program at Don Bosco Tech, Karunapuram center.

She was found to be very active and agile during the training program, trying to efficiently communicate with everyone in her batch. She is multitalented with skills such as dancing, singing, and playing games, and also enthusiastically spreads positivity around her. Through life skill sessions, she could get rid of her timidity and stage fear.



At the time of the interview, she was hired by Ratnadeep, in Hyderabad for the role of Customer Service Representative with a pay scale of INR 14,600/- per month including ESI and PF. Now she has the capacity to lead her family and support her parents who are extremely grateful to Don Bosco Tech Society for the huge transformation in their daughter's life. Niharika overwhelmingly says that her journey at Don Bosco Tech Karunapuram center will forever remain a happy memory for the rest of her life.

Chanti V.

"The difference between who you are and who you want to be is what you do".

Chanti is from a low-income family in Vepagunta, Vishkapattanam. After he completed his intermediate, he wanted

to go for higher studies but could not afford the fees. Then, he got to know about the Don Bosco Tech training centre, Sabbavaram through his neighbourhood friend and the mobilization activity in his village. He came to know from the counsellors that this institute provides free training with NSDC certifications.

After joining Don Bosco Tech, along with the E-commerce course, Chanti also learned spoken English and computer. The trainers still remember that on his first day at Don Bosco Tech, his poor communication skills and less than minimum knowledge of Computers were vividly noticed by them. There was no proper education system or facilities in his village for him to learn such skills. But his desperation towards learning a new subject and need for a better job convinced the trainers to include him in the E-Commerce Domain.

He managed to get placed in the company, Ecom Express as a delivery boy. After witnessing his talent, the company gave him higher responsibility and now he gets INR 20,000/- per month.



He and his parents were extremely happy about his achievement. He is very grateful to the institute for making him what he is today. Now, he has become an inspiration for young boys in his village who are struggling to get a decent job. He has informed many of them about DB Tech, Sabbavaram, and many have expressed their desire to join the institute.

Klerina N Areng

Klerina N Areng from Meghalaya she completed her 10th in the year 2009 as a private candidate. Then she heard about the Don Bosco Tech Society giving free training plus placement out of State. She was very interested and decided to join the training.

She was enrolled under Skill Meghalaya F& B Service Associate Batch-2 in the Don Bosco Tech, Shillong Centre. All her classmates were younger than her so most of them made fun of her and called her mommy, but she just ignored them.

She was very punctual, respectful, and was a very good learner. She learned everything faster than her batch mates. In the whole 2 months of training, she showed discipline and excellent results. Finally, after the completion of her training, DB Tech offered her a job at JW Marriott Sahar Mumbai, as a Steward with a monthly salary of CTC Rs 15000.

She is very much thankful to DBTech and MSSDS Skill Meghalaya for providing her an opportunity to earn her livelihood in a decent way. Now, with the salary she will be able to support her parents financially.



Fr Biju Michael, SDB
General Councillor for South Asia

Salesian presence in the Caribbean

Beneath the Caribbean sun, in villages full of life and joy, Don Bosco continues to be a significant response for the young people of these lands.

For more than one hundred years, the Salesian presence has found both a fertile environment and climate in some Caribbean countries which today, as in the past, confirm their importance in the presence of their young people, in their

joyful, affectionate and simple people, in their religious sensitivity and in the welcome they offer others: Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico have offered and continue to offer a propitious environment for the Salesian mission and a fertile land for Don Bosco's charism.

The Salesians, organised into two Provinces, the Antilles and Haiti, together with many other members of the Salesian Family, make this presence concrete today. They are the fruit of the generosity and passion of great missionaries with good will, big dreams, trust in Providence and commitment to the education and evangelisation of the young; this is how Don Bosco's presence was consolidated. There were also natural or social historical events that motivated the decisions that led to its current conformation.

A bit of history

Although the first request for Salesians in the West Indies dates back to 1896, the first country to receive a Salesian presence was Cuba in 1916, followed by the Dominican Republic in 1933, then Haiti in 1936 and finally Puerto Rico in 1947.

Dolores Betancourt, a native of Camagüey, had signed a private agreement in Turin with Fr Paul Albera regarding a foundation in her home town. The first Salesians arrived in Cuba on 4 April 1917 to open a work in Camagüey.

Fr José Calasanz (1872-1936), originally from Azanuy, Spain, a Salesian since 1890, was sent as a missionary to promote foundations in Cuba, Peru and Bolivia. In 1917, the first Salesians entered Cuba, together with Fr Esteban Capra and two Brothers (Bros Ullivarri and Celaya). In 1917, the Salesians were entrusted with the church dedicated to Our Lady of Charity in a rural area of Camagüey, from where they coordinated the first school of arts and trades.

Haiti, Cap-Haïtien

Salesian communities began to grow and consolidate in Cuba, first sharing canonical property with the Salesian Province of Tarragona, Spain. In 1924, it passed to the Province of Mexico and three years later, due to the religious persecution suffered in Mexico, the headquarters of the Province was transferred to Havana, Cuba.

Father Pittini carried out the duties of Provincial in the eastern part of the United States and there he received instructions from the Superior General, Fr Peter Ricaldone, to move to Santo Domingo to examine the possibility of the Congregation establishing itself in the Dominican Republic.

On 16 August 1933, Fr Pittini arrived in the port of San Pedro de Macorís. In February 1934, Fr Pittini took on the role of Superior of the Salesians who had just arrived in the Dominican Republic; he supervised the work of the school under construction and got to know the people. On 11 October 1935, Pope Pius XI appointed him Archbishop of Santo Domingo.



Haiti, Pétion-Ville

The Salesians arrived in Haiti in 1936. The Rector Major delegated Fr Peter Gimbert, former Provincial of Lyon, to implant the Salesian charism in Haiti. He arrived on 27 May 1936, accompanied by Salesian Bro. Adriano Massa. Later, other confreres arrived to complete the community.

From its foundation, Haiti was successively part of the Salesian Province of Mexico-Antilles with its headquarters in Havana; later it became part of the Province of the Antilles – along with Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico – with its headquarters in Santo Domingo.



Haiti, Gressier

The foundation in Puerto Rico became a reality on 24 April 1947, when Fr Pedro M. Savani, former Provincial of Mexico-Antille, arrived to take charge of the Parish of St John Bosco in Santurce, Lutz Street. From here, he began the management of an Oratory on what is now Cantera land, where, in 1949, he began the construction of the chapel that would later become the imposing Church of Mary Help of Christians.

The canonical erection of the Antilles Province took place on 15 September 1953 when Fr Renato Ziggiotti was Rector Major, under the patronage of St John Bosco, with its headquarters in La Víbora (Havana, Cuba). It was later transferred to Compostela (Old Havana). After the Cuban Revolution, the provincial headquarters was transferred to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, at the Don Bosco College where it remained until 1993, when it was moved to its present location at Calle 30 de Marzo #52, in the city of Santo Domingo.

Since January 1992, Haiti has been a Vice-Province based in Port-au-Prince.

Don Bosco in the Caribbean today

The Salesian Province of the Antilles is made up of three countries in the Caribbean region: Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Haiti forms a separate Vice-Province. In total there are 169 Salesians of Don Bosco in the four countries: 15 in Cuba, 74 in Haiti, 67 in the Dominican Republic and 13 in Puerto Rico.

The works that animate the two Provinces in 32 communities include 41 educational centres (of which at least 20 are technical training centres), 33 oratories, 23 social works, 8 retreat-meeting houses, 1 environmental training centre, 3

formation houses, 4 social communication centres-recording studios, 2 radio stations and 18 parishes with 80 chapels and 44 mission houses.

The Salesian Family in the Caribbean has great vitality and is made up of various groups: Salesians of Don Bosco, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Salesian Cooperators, Association of Mary Help of Christians, Past Pupils (SDB-FMA), Daughters of the Sacred Hearts, Volunteers of Don Bosco, Damas Salesians and Parish Missionaries of Mary Help of Christians (the latter, a Pious Union, approved by the Archbishop of Santo Domingo, Archbishop Octavio A. Beras, was founded by Fr Andrés Nemeth, sdb, on 16 June 1961; although it is not part of the Salesian Family, but because of its closeness to it, it attends its meetings). Relations are warm, some pastoral projects are shared and they meet frequently.

In a very particular social and political climate, the four countries are experiencing a mass migration of their young people and entire families, motivated by hunger, lack of food and work, violence and the search for better paid opportunities. In these circumstances, the Salesian presence continues to be very committed to the processes of education, job training, citizenship and life of faith. There is a serious commitment to defending the rights to education, food and a dignified life for children, adolescents and young adults; playgrounds are used to accompany and encourage playful activities and encounters that allow people to make friends. Music and dance are natural expressions that find in Salesian oratories the stimulus and space to express themselves at their best. Their courtyards have always been places of encounter and refuge, even in the face of natural events.

This presence today is prophetic in sharing with people the social realities that each country is experiencing, deciding to remain close to those most in need, encouraging daily faith, a simple friendship that speaks of God, full of hope

and comfort, with fraternal gestures of solidarity and love for the most vulnerable, especially children and young people.



Santo Domingo, La Plaza

Fr Hugo OROZCO SÁNCHEZ, sdb
Regional Councillor for Interamerica