



## Edmund Rice Services

# Maasin Diocese – The Philippines



Greetings from all of us at Maasin.

Edmund Rice Services, Maasin, aims to ensure for poor and needy youth and children across the Diocese, services conducive to an “improved quality of life” and living “life to the full”.

This visionary response is in the context of our 2008 Chapter documents which call to open our hearts “to the cry of the poor and the earth, and to be moved to prophetic action through advocacy and works for justice.” It is also to be seen as taking up the call of the 2008 Synod of the Diocese of Maasin to preferential options for the Poor and the Young.

The UN Millenium Development Goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality, improving women's reproductive health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, ensuring environment sustainability, and "developing a global partnership for development", spell out reference points in our forward journey of providing service.



Br. Roshan D'Cunha, Co-ordinator of the Back-to-Schooling Service, is responding to the needs of poverty-stricken children and youth in the spirit of Edmund opening his heart to Christ present in the poor. He shares his reflections on his ministry:

One of the three services offered by the Edmund Rice Services is the Back-to-Schooling

**Br. Roshan D'Cunha** Service established with a purpose to bring back children and youth who are out of schooling mainly due to poverty-related reasons.

There are quite a number of children who are unable to attend school because their families cannot afford their basic needs such as food, school materials, footwear, backpacks, etc. In fact what is needed by any one child to make the difference for his/her being able to attend school and continue with it, is surprisingly minimal.

Some children at some time commenced school and “dropped out” altogether. There is another group of children enrolled in school who attend in the morning from time to time but having nothing to eat at mid-day, take off at that time for the rest of the day, because of hunger. This is clearly an “absentee group”. There are others who undernourished and having nothing to eat at mid-day, remain at school listless, and psychologically absent in the class setting. All such children need particular help to enter the back-to-schooling process; and may come under the scope of the Service.

We have begun with the school closest to our house (Maria Clara Elementary School).

We have received great support and cooperation from the principal and staff there in sorting out where to start in a systematic way. Since our going in there, eight out-of-school children have returned back to school; another fifteen hunger-stricken children, who are on the verge of dropping out are also being helped by the service. All of these 23 children are given school supplies and a meal in the mid-day break. (The meal is given only if they attend school.)

I already see a change in these children – their faces seem to have brightened up and they appear energetic. But, above all else, I think it's the notion that someone is concerned about them and cares for them that gives them the strength and encouragement to attend school every day with their heads held high.

There are some children who cannot attend schooling because of family complications – one such child, let us call her Mary, whose house I visited, is just 9 and has 4 siblings, all younger than herself. Her mother is a drug-addict and has left the house for Manila leaving all five children in the care of their grandmother. Father is a daily labourer whose income is not at all enough even if he gets a job every day. “I go door-to-door selling sweets in order to buy at least some rice for the



**Needy students of Maria Clara Elementary School being provided with Mid-day Meal at Maria Clara, Maasin.**

family”, the grandmother says to me. When both adults are out trying to earn (which is every day almost), this nine year old girl has to perform the role of an adult looking after babies.

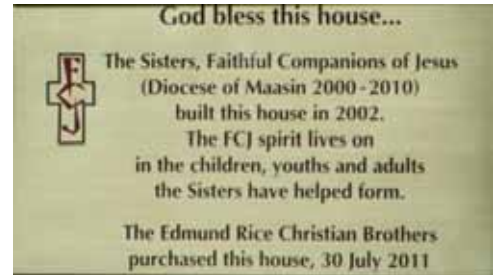
There are others who have problems of loss of interest and motivation, like a teenager I met one day who said that she was tired of going to school. I did not know what to say to her. The teachers who were with me laughed out loud of course at her answer, because she had only a year to graduate from high school. I find myself rather helpless in these kinds of situations but I suppose as one brother in our community says: „We can do what we can do and we can’t do what we can’t do...” In time, it may be possible to motivate the local community to find solutions to such problems as these.



FCJ Signpost replaced with a new Edmund Rice Christian Brothers Convento sign.

Since the purchase of the convent in Maria Clara, Maasin City, from the Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus, the sign on the road has been replaced with a new sign: Edmund Rice Christian Brothers Convento and the people passing by, are taking note of this smooth transition. The people have accepted us well in their midst. With the services beginning, there is a sense of bringing hope and energy and the communities targeted are responding with fresh hope and energy. The Brothers in Maria Clara have placed a plaque on the front wall of the house near the front door, invoking a blessing on the house and marking the service of 10 long years of the Sisters to the

children, youth and adults of the area. They are still remembered by the people and their contribution will never be erased from the hearts of those whose lives have been touched.



FCJ Plaque that decorates the wall, near the front door of the Brothers' Maasin Residence.

Paul is busy in his capacity as the Program Leader. He has been the link person with the clergy and other important people in the Diocese and the Government. He has been invited to give a message or keynote address to the people in prison with special dignitaries attending the program. Presently he is attending the Child Protection Conference being delivered by Mrs. Pauline Meemeduma at Kabankalan.

Graeme is back in Maasin, having negotiated a typhoon on a tricycle (which ended up facing the wrong direction), in the last stage of his return journey from Nairobi, Kenya exploring a “Way to the Future”. Graeme’s wealth of knowledge and vast experience in the field of Ministry has been an asset to the Congregation as a whole and to the underprivileged of the World as a whole.

Theo has been working with schools to plan for the Campus Ministry. He held an orientation program introducing Edmund Rice Services to all concerned, which was an opportunity at Baugo National High School to relate the understanding of the Services to the values of Jesus and Edmund.



Trinidad C. Terceno is a teacher in Baugo National School. She is the coordinator for Campus Ministry. She introduces her school giving a comprehensive outline of its very needy situation. Since this school brings together many of the problems we have encountered in our visits to rural high schools, we are publishing Ms. Terceno’s report in full as follows:

## BAUGO NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

Baugo, Maasin City, So. Leyte

Trinidad C. Terceño,  
Baugo National High School

Baugo National High School formerly known as Baugo Barangay High School is situated on top of a hill of Barangay Baugo 20 kilometers away from the city of Maasin, province of Southern Leyte. In spite of its mountainous location, it is accessible to land transportation. It has a total land area of 10, 080 sq. Meters. It was opened in June 1977 through the joint efforts of the former Barangay Captain Cipriano Morcen and the Assistant Principal Mrs. Serafia Delima.

Presently, the school is manned by one Head Teacher and seven secondary school teachers all handling full teaching and non-teaching loads. It has eight instructional classrooms. Out of these, two classrooms were utilized as computer room and school’s office and library. With increasing enrolment, the school needs additional instructional classrooms.

The two hundred fifty-seven (257) students currently enrolled in the school come from Baugo and from far flung barangays of Acasia, Anislagon, Cansirong, Lunas and Monte Alegre (Matalom, Leyte). Students coming from Lunas, Anislagon and Monte Alegre have to walk three to five kilometers everyday from their home to school and back. They have to leave home at five O'clock in the morning so as not to be late in their first morning session that starts at 7:40A.M.. When they get home after the afternoon classes, it is already evening. This pathetic situation of our students becomes even more difficult during rainy days.

The school's mission to achieve quality education is quite a tough job for the teachers considering the many problems that get in the way of achieving the goal. Aside from the heavy subject loads they are handling, teachers have to face the disturbing problem of students' absenteeism, tardiness, increasing drop-out and repetition rate and low academic performance. The causes of these problems can be attributed to many factors; the family, the community, the school and the individual student himself.

Most of the students come from very low income families oftentimes confronted with many problems. Impoverished parents fail to provide the basic needs of their children like food, clothing, shelter, health care and education. Some students confessed that there are days that they come to school with empty stomach and what made them survive in school is the generosity of their classmates and schoolmates who share their packed lunch to them. The stressful family life and events adversely affect the motivation and interest of students in school.



**Staff of Baugo National High School at a Teachers' Day function.**

regularly because of insufficient water supply. The school's water supply depends only on rainwater collected in a small water reservoir during rainy days. Ideally, there should at least a urinal, a lavatory and a toilet seat per classroom and sufficient water supply.

Unfazed by these challenges, the teachers exert more efforts in initiating interventions they possibly can find and developing good lives of communications for stakeholders' involvement and active support. They continuously find ways to do things effectively that can open the door of opportunity for all students who seek improvement of their lives and well-being. Each one realises that the one lasting way to face complexities of life is for everyone to work harder each day and all these in the spirit of service of others.

And finally, it was recently announced that Br. Peter Harney cfc, Deputy Province Leader, Oceania, was invited to take up responsibility in Edmund Rice International Team (ERI) in Geneva in 2012. Following discernment, Peter has accepted this invitation. Peter has been involved in the Philippines Mission for a number of years. He has been a true Brother and a wonderful companion to those serving in this country. His contribution in various ways has been appreciated and through his presence and support, he has been able to reach out to many. We thank him and also pray for his future Ministry.

One of the important facilities that should be available in the school to answer the strong needs of the students is a decent school lunch counter also known as school lunchroom or nutrition center. This can serve as center for feeding but unfortunately our school does not have a functional school lunch counter where students may avail of cheaper but nutritious foods.

Another physical services indispensable in school are comfort rooms (toilets). The absence of this facility is detrimental to both health and learning focus of students.

The school has only one (1) shared toilet for the almost three hundred (300) students. And this toilet is not even used

Daghang Salamat  
Many thanks  
From

Maasin Community-The Philippines.