

An urgent call for solidarity with Lasallians in Madagascar following Cyclone Gezani

The devastation caused by Cyclone Gezani in Madagascar - Africa's largest island - continues to impact the lives of Lasallians in Toamasina, one of the country's most important cities, where the Stella Maris and St. Joseph schools and suffered severe damage and destruction last February.

"The passage of Cyclone Gezani has severely affected many people - including Lasallian families - and has also caused extensive damage to infrastructure and roads", states Brother Marc Marcel Fanomezana, who is part of the St. Joseph School community.

"Our school and our community have also suffered very negative consequences", adds Brother Marc, prefect of studies for the educational work, who explains that **"today we find ourselves in a very complicated situation, as we are unable to welcome students"**. He continues, "We are also facing several difficulties: lack of drinking water, lack of access to electricity, and also food and social insecurity, which is increasing more and more in the city".

St. Joseph

Founded in 1869, **St. Joseph's School has 257 students in preschool and primary school**, a teaching team of 12 teachers, and two maintenance staff. The school is led by Brothers Avotra Andrianarisoa (School Principal), Jules Rambelason (Community Director), Jean Jacques Randriamanampy (Administrator), and Brother Marc Marcel himself.

Faithful to Lasallian educational principles and values, St. Joseph School is part of the evangelising mission of the local Church, through the Cathédrale parish, and **provides extracurricular programmes in Christian formation, such as catechesis, and human formation, such as dance and karate.**

After celebrating 155 years of existence last year, it is now facing one of its greatest crises. **The material damage caused by the disaster has led to the**

suspension of all school and extracurricular activities.

Stella Maris

The situation at Stella Maris Catholic High School is no different. **The cyclone has disabled 95% of its infrastructure**, tearing off the roofs of nine classroom buildings, the administrative building and the Brothers' residence, destroying doors, windows and sanitary facilities, and causing the total loss of school furniture, computer equipment and archives, as well as collapsing the perimeter walls that ensure the school's security.

"This situation has taught us to be resilient, supportive and motivated to continue our studies, even in difficult situations", says Johanna Asma Soamampierika, a third-year student in General Technology Training.

Indeed, the resilience of the educational community has led to alternatives for partially resuming school activities. However, Brother Philippe Armand Razafindrakoto, Director of the institution, comments that "despite the optimisation of available space, this situation is temporary, and **our goal is to restore a full schedule for each student as soon as the infrastructure allows**".

Therefore, given the magnitude of the repair work required at the Lasallian educational institutions St. Joseph and Stella Maris, **we renew our call for solidarity and assistance to all people of good will and to the entire Lasallian Family worldwide.**

"There is still much to be done and repaired, and this is where we appeal to former students, parents and other entities. Your help and contribution would be most welcome. We will be eternally grateful", says Professor Livarison Razafindrakoto, who is also assistant supervisor at Stella Maris.

*We invite you to express your solidarity with the Lasallians of Madagascar through the emergency fund led by our non-profit organisation, **La Salle Foundation.***

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