

# Teaching computers to deaf and dumb in Solomon Islands

(Leo Duffy, Don Bosco Volunteer, GBR)

HONIARA: 9th March 2009 -- "Angela and I are volunteer teachers of English and Computers from the UK who have been privileged to assist the Salesians of Don Bosco. Angela achieved a life-long dream when she retired, by going to work in underdeveloped countries, teaching English to underprivileged children. Both of us had been involved with Rotary International for many years, and Angela had been President in her own circle, and knew what was needed. Her first assignment was in Ethiopia on the war-torn border with Eritrea. She loved working with children so much that she volunteered to go again, this time to Cambodia, again a country that had suffered terribly with thousands of orphaned children.



This is where I joined Angela as a computer teacher, and since then we have worked in East Timor, the Philippines, Ghana, El Salvador. I had long since realised that children need the chance for an education, and Deaf and Dumb children are no exception to this. The Don Bosco Technical Training Centre this weekend opened its doors to 27 Deaf and Dumb students and their teachers from Aruligo, where Bro. George van de Zant SM has commenced an excellent training operation for these boys and girls.

After meeting Bro. George and his students at the Marist Centre, I was impressed by their signing abilities, and then thought about how to get them to communicate with non-deaf people. After a brief conversation with Fr Ambrose Pereira SDB, our Rector, the idea quickly grew that we could offer these boys and girls computer studies at our Centre, which would allow them to communicate with the outside world.

We have all been amazed at how quickly they have mastered computer skills. I see no reason why, long term, they could not be usefully employed in this computer-related age, as they are in my own country. Their artistic skills are astonishing; after but a few hours of lessons they were far ahead of many normal students at this stage.



This program will need financing for the longer term for it to succeed, but the long-term benefits to society will outweigh any costs incurred now. I would like to thank Sr Anna Maria Gervasoni FMA, Fr Ambrose Pereira SDB, the Salesians and all staff and students who gave up their weekend to help in this project. Giving is far more rewarding

than receiving".