



SOLOMON ISLANDS

St Dominic's Rural Training Centre, Vanga Point

This rural training centre was established in 1971 by the Brothers and has become a showpiece for this type of education throughout the world. It provides young men from the villages with vocational training in building, mechanics and agriculture.

Location

In the Western Solomons, near the border of PNG. The town of Gizo is on an adjacent island and is a centre for scuba diving and has a potential tourist industry.

School

Students spend two years at Vanga receiving training which is designed to equip them with the ability to begin income-generating activities when they return to the villages. Employment and economic opportunities in towns are limited, but an education that advances village life has the chance to have a greater effect on the alleviation of poverty and the advancement of people.

Students go through a two-year course, the second of which encourages them to develop their own income-generating project at the Centre as a model for future development back in the village. All students are boarders and are required to grow most of their own food to supplement their school fee of about \$70 per year.

Young People

The students come from all over the Solomon Islands. There are many more applications for a place at the Centre than there are positions available. Students are normally in their 20s and need to have come from the villages, where they would have had to have led a productive life from the time of leaving school in grade 6 until their entry into St. Dominic's. The aim is for these students to return to the village and not compete for employment in the towns.

Marists

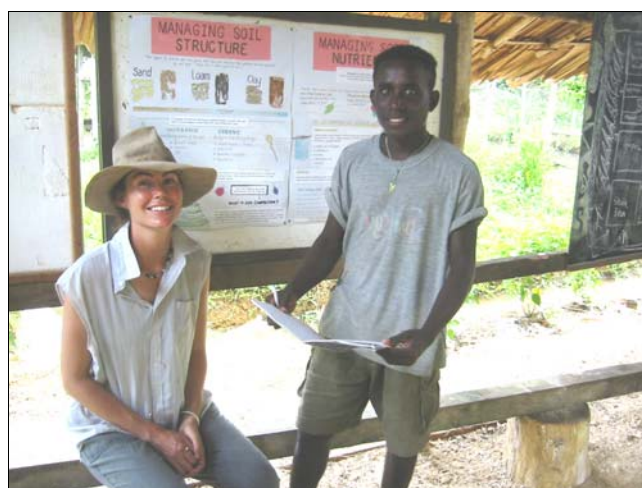
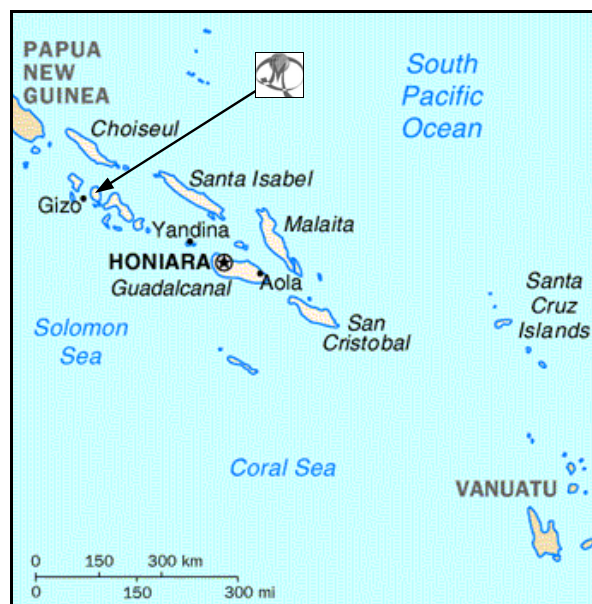
For the last six years, St Dominic's has been led by Brother Jack Kalisto, a Solomon Islander, assisted by other brothers from the Solomon Islands and Australia. Br Tony Burrows from Australia now leads St Dominic's.

Andrea Johnson from South Australia has been a volunteer during 2002 and Sharon Attard, a teacher from a Marist school in Australia, will replace her in 2003.

Funding

Since very early on it has been a self-sustaining project through the sale of its produce in the local area and in the country. In the current economic situation, this is no longer possible. The fish cannery has would down its operation, public servants are not sure of their pay and there are less Solomon dollars circulating in the community. St. Dominic's still produces food but the usual markets for it have been lost.

Marist students are invited to enter into a partnership with St. Dominic's to provide a program of financial support for the time that it is needed and to continue to support our volunteer program.



Andrea Johnson, a Marist volunteer, at work in her 'classroom' made of Sago palm leaf.