



# Vincentian Solidarity Office

## October 2007 Bulletin

### Comments from the Director

Dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with us!

I am happy to report on the recipients of VSF Micro-Project Grants in September of 2007 that were financed with monies from the Vincentian Solidarity Fund (VSF). The VSO awarded VSF Micro-Project Grants to the (1) Province of the Congo to purchase a stove for the Scholasticate of St. Vincent de Paul in Kimwenda-Kinshasha; (2) Province of Madagascar to expand radio broadcasts for faith formation, health education, and general education from the RAKAMA Radio Station at the Eglise Catholique in Vohipeno; (3) Vice-Province of Nigeria for renovations at the Blessed Ghebre Michael House in Ikot Ekpene to provide more rooms for seminarians; (4) South Indian Province to construct a Miraculous Medal Shrine at St. Mary's Church in Mariapura; (5) North Indian Province to purchase sleeping cots for 60 children of the De Paul Hostel in Gopalpur-on-sea; and (6) Province of Ecuador to set up a computer center for the seminarians of the Seminario San Vicente de Paúl in Quito. I am most grateful for the continuing contributions of confreres to the VSF that made these micro-project grants possible.

During the current liturgical season, the Gospel readings from Luke have made references to God's justice and concern for marginalized people, including the story of Lazarus--a passage that lies at the heart of our Community's heritage. This bulletin describes the works of confreres serving some of the most marginalized groups of our time: indigenous peoples living in developing regions of the world. I am humbled to be connected, in a small way through the work of the VSO, to these important and urgent ministries to the profoundly poor.

Fraternally in St. Vincent,

Brother Peter A. Campbell, C.M.

### Rights for Indigenous People in Ceará

Indigenous peoples constitute the poorest segment of society in many countries. These peoples often lack the civil rights and public services afforded to non-indigenous residents. Indigenous peoples especially suffer when they lose their land. Lands rights assure a livelihood for most indigenous groups, and are vital for their communal ties and cultural identity.

Several indigenous groups struggle to obtain civil rights and protect their land in rural Ceará State in northeastern Brazil. Local authorities in Ceará State disregard the welfare of indigenous peoples to cater to powerful commercial interests that appropriate indigenous land and develop it for private gain.



*Father Alexandre Fonseca de Paula, C.M. poses with an Anacé village leader and his family in Ceará State*

Father Alexandre Fonseca de Paula, C.M. of the Fortaleza Province, ministers to the indigenous peoples of Ceará State as Coordinator of the Northeast Region of Conselho Indigenista Missionário (CIMI). The National Confederation of Bishops of Brazil established CIMI in 1972 to help indigenous peoples overcome their poverty, secure their civil rights, and preserve their indigenous culture.

The urgent situation of one indigenous group living in Ceará State--the Anacés--motivated Father Alexandre to seek assistance from the VSO. The Anacés live in 34 villages where they sustain themselves by farming,

fishing, hunting, and selling native crafts. In the late 1990s the local government unjustly displaced 300 Anacé families from their land to allow businesses to develop an industrial complex and seaport.

Relocation efforts for the families were haphazard; compensation for Anacé land was grossly inadequate. The expulsion of the indigenous people ripped their families apart, aggravated their poverty, and contributed to the suppression of Anacé culture.

In 2003 Father Alexandre began to focus his efforts on preventing further displacement of the Anacé people. Father Alexandre assisted the Anacés in developing a plan to: form skilled leadership for their villages; assist Anacé women to create handcraft micro-enterprises; revive Anacé art, dance and culture; and initiate formal procedures with the national government to protect Anacé land and provide the Anacé people with better health and education services. Father Alexandre looked to the VSO for help to fund key supports for implementing this plan. These included: materials and transportation for formation meetings and workshops; and the purchase of computer equipment and hiring of staff to map the Anacé land and conduct a census of the Anacé people. The VSO assisted Father Alexandre in obtaining a grant from the Netherlands Center for Indigenous Peoples--that was matched with monies from the VSF--to provide him and the Anacé people with these essential supports.

### **A Jeep in Kethepally**

Indigenous peoples in rural India still suffer from the effects of the caste system that formerly stratified Indian society. Often tribal peoples in India are treated as “untouchables” and lack social status, education, and property. Confreres of the South Indian Province have found these social conditions to be prominent among the tribal villages they serve in the Kethepally Mission in Andhra Pradesh State. Rich land lords constitute a tiny portion of the population of the mission area, but own most of the land. These circumstances enable the land lords to exploit tribal residents by paying them small wages and lending them monies under unfair terms to perpetuate their dependency.

The confreres of the Kethepally Mission have a number of works to alleviate the poverty of the tribal residents and foster their autonomy. These include economic development projects for women, mobile

medical camps, adult education programs, a primary school for 400 children and hostel for 200 children, an AIDS prevention program, and youth groups.



*The new Mahindra jeep at the Kethepally Mission*

Until recently confreres at the Kethepally Mission were unable to deliver social and pastoral services to several outlying villages because they lacked a vehicle capable of traversing the unpaved and washed-out roads in the mission area. The VSO was able to match a grant from Cooperación Vicenciana para el Desarrollo – Acción Misionera Vicenciana de España (COVIDE-AMVE) with monies from the VSF to purchase a 4-wheel drive, Mahindra Bolero jeep for the Kethepally Mission able to transport social and pastoral services to all of its villages.

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**Our goal:** To assist the poorer provinces, vice-provinces, and missions of the Congregation of the Mission with obtaining funds for their works and needs.

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