



Vincenzian Solidarity Office

December 2015 Bulletin



Expanding Social Services in Enugu and Manapparai



Following St. Vincent's example, our confreres in developing regions often establish charitable organizations for meeting the needs of the poor. Here we present the work of confreres who are launching and expanding social service agencies in distant, but similarly impoverished places. The VSO is working to fund their efforts.

Fr. Jacob Ugwoke, C.M. recently started the DePaul Hope Social Center in Enugu in southern Nigeria. The organization assists widows--some whom have migrated to Enugu after their husbands were killed by Boko Haram, a terrorist group. Widows and their children are especially vulnerable in Nigerian society.



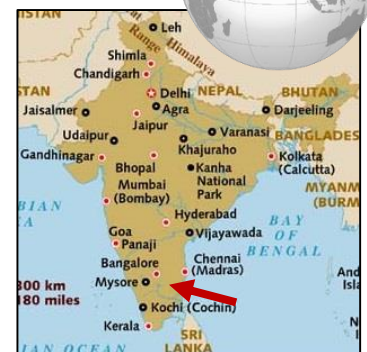
A family assisted by Fr. Jacob in Enugu

Widows are often ostracized from their villages, denied access to their husbands' property if they have no male children, and struggle to support their families while working as laborers for low wages. Some are forced into prostitution while their children are also trafficked. Fr. Jacob is helping 20 widows and their families obtain a better life. His center provides widows with counseling, group seminars for mutual affirmation and support, and computer training (which can include their children). The center is also providing some of the women with micro-loans to start small businesses. Fr. Jacob's most pressing need is to purchase a four-wheel drive vehicle for his social services center to traverse the rough roads to visit and transport the widows and children, and advocate for them at government offices.



Fr. Patrick in Chennai

Thousands of kilometers away, Fr. C. Joseph Patrick, C.M. is also in need of a four-wheel drive vehicle for SONTHEM, a social service agency in eastern Tamil Nadu State in southern India. Fr. Patrick recently became director of SONTHEM, and is leading the agency in starting a mobile medical program to serve 18 remote villages in the Manapparai Taluk. SONTHEM will use the vehicle as an ambulance and clinic to bring medical services and health education to



4,500 village families. The villagers are mostly low caste people living in thatched huts who have little or no access to medical care, and lack household

and communal hygiene. As a consequence, child and maternal mortality are common in the villages. The mobile clinic will regularly bring a nurse and health care workers, medicines, vaccinations, and health awareness programs to the villages. Currently Fr. Patrick is leading a team of volunteers in bringing emergency relief to poor residents in the city of Chennai. Chennai has experienced devastating flooding from monsoon rains. The neighborhoods being assisted by Fr. Patrick are typically the last to receive government assistance.

The VSO is working to raise about \$40,000 USD to purchase vehicles for Fr. Jacob's and Fr. Patrick's agencies.

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Water in Mbinga, Mbambi and Mpepai

The works of our confreres at our Tanzania Mission in eastern Africa are growing quickly. One of the challenges in establishing or expanding new works in the mission, is the provision of safe drinking and washing water for the people they serve. Often, government water utilities are nonexistent or are undependable. This was especially the case for our confreres working in the Mbinga area in southwestern Tanzania. The Tanzania Mission approached the VSO for funding assistance for three water projects in support of its works in and near Mbinga.

Two of projects involved the construction and equipping of bore wells. One well serves 400 Matengo tribal children attending De Paul School in Mbinga, operated by our confreres. The VSO obtained monies from Manos Unidas and a U.S.A. donor, and used matching funds from the Vincentian Solidarity Fund (VSF) to finance this well.



De Paul students and their new well in Mbinga

The second well provides water for the Vincentian Spirituality Center located four kilometers away from Mbinga in Mbambi. The center hosts overnight retreats, days of recollection, and spiritual conferences for confreres and the clergy and religious in the dioceses where they work. The VSO financed this well with a grant from the Diocese of Essen, and also monies from a U.S.A. donor and the VSF.



The spirituality center in Mbambi and its new well

The third project, located 40 kilometers southwest of Mbinga, has brought water to the Mpepai parish, a primary school, and surrounding villages.

This required the purchasing and laying of piping to reach a water source from a mountain 11 kilometers away, and construction of several water storage tanks.



Water stations at the parish and a village in Mpepai

The VSO financed this work with monies from another donor in the U.S.A. and from the VSF.



Drinking from one of the Mpepai water stations

Vincentian Solidarity Office
500 East Cheltenham Avenue
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19144
United States of America

Our goal: To assist the Congregation of the Mission with obtaining funds for its evangelization and service of the poor.

How to contact us:

Fr. Miles Heinen, C.M., Executive Director:

Telephone: +1 215-713-2432

Email: cmvso@yahoo.com

Scott Fina, Ph.D., Associate Director:

Telephone: +1 215-713-2433

Email: scottfina@gmail.com

María José Pacheco del Río, Project Manager:

Telephone: +1 215-713-3983

Email: MPacheco@cmphlsvs.org

Fax: +1 215-843-9361

Our website: www.cmglobal.org/vso