



Vincentian Solidarity Office

October 2020 Bulletin

The Uphill Road to a Quality Catholic Education, Bapulapadu Mandal, India

The Province of Southern India built hostels for the children of Bapulapadu Mandal in the Krishna district several years ago. The hostels house and feed children from families whose parents want a better future for their children; some are unable to care for them adequately due to chronic illness and poverty. Although the children attended local government schools, the Vincentian missionaries saw that the local schools were failing to properly educate the children. Two important shortcomings were discovered, unqualified teachers and instruction only in the local language. To be successful in India's modern economy English language fluency is necessary. The Vincentian missionaries determined to solve the problem by building and organizing an English Medium School to deliver quality education to meet the future needs of the children for life and employment in a modern economy. The school would serve both the children in the hostels as well as others living in the forty villages that make up the Vincentian mission.

St. Vincent's Catholic School in Singanaguldam Village opened in 2017 to about three hundred elementary school children. It serves impoverished and tribal children from all over the rural area. Many inhabitants work in bonded labor and are oppressed by wealthier landowners. With the supports of societal pressure, employers (lenders) force indebted workers (borrowers) to repay debt by low wage labor for long periods of time, even years. The Vincentian school shines a ray of hope for a better life. Even poor parents now have an affordable option for securing a quality education for their talented children.

Highly qualified teachers instruct in English so the children are

developing their language competency from an early age. With their language skills they can advance to higher education and gainful employment, freeing them from poverty and the trap of bonded labor. Additionally, they are taught Catholic values at the school, such as the importance of faith, prayer, equal opportunity for girls, care for the poor, peace and social justice.

The VSO assisted the Southern Indian Province to secure funding for the project from its conception to recent completion. In the four years of development, the Vincentian missionaries put to use each

portion of the building as it was completed, each phase allowing more children to attend. So while the school has been functioning for about two years, the final phase of construction was completed just this summer amid the pandemic shut downs. Because of the government lockdowns due to the COVID 19 virus, the construction workers had to stay at the work site. They were sheltered and fed there by the Province. This allowed the construction to continue throughout the lockdown. Eventually this school will educate six hundred children from age 3 to 15 years old.



Lower Kindergarten class and teacher, 2019



Fr. Sebastian Dicurs, C.M. helping the nursery school children to use playground equipment. It was the first time they played with such.



Construction of the ground floor of the school, 2017. Contractor Mr. G. Narayana Rao supervises the work.



Administrators, teachers and non-teaching staff of the school with the completed building, 2020.

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

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The Nuts and Bolts of Vincentian Seminary Formation, Maputo, Mozambique

The Vincentian Seminary, in Maputo in the Vice Province of Mozambique has the goal of preparing missionaries for the 21st century. Applications to the seminary have increased yearly to the current level of forty young men. In Mozambique, formation to the priesthood incorporates real life problems like fixing a flat tire in the bush. A missionary in a distant rural mission station needs to know how to hook up and repair a generator to power lights or how to hook up a sound system for a large crowd for Sunday Mass – and he needs to provide the music during Mass. The Vincentian formation program anticipates the problems of life and ministry in mission lands where resources are few and help at any price is hard to come by. So while studies include philosophy and theology, there is also training in technology, music,

electricity, agriculture and vehicle maintenance. Priests here need to be quite self-reliant and able to impart these skills to their parishioners because the areas they serve are often remote and impoverished. Mozambique, a southeastern African nation, is one of the poorest countries in the world. Since the seminary in Mozambique lacked the necessary equipment for these classes, the Vincentian missionaries applied for a grant from the VSO. With this grant they purchased guitars and a keyboard as well as computers and even a lawn mower. They also secured the teaching materials and instructors for these areas of study.



Seminarians at Blessed Gabriel Michael House of Formation, Mozambique trying out the new musical instruments and computer (above), Nov. 2019. On Piano: Abdul Celestino and on guitar: João Massango

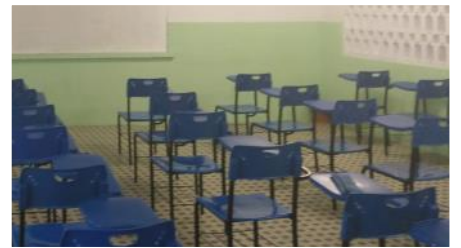
Beauty and Function at the Service of Children, City of Fortaleza, Brazil



The pre-school classroom

The students at Colegio Maria Montfort school have always enjoyed learning, but have not enjoyed the seats. For years the students were sitting at the same uncomfortable desks at Colegio Maria Montfort school in the city of Fortaleza, state capital of Ceará, Brazil. The VSO recently found comments by an online reviewer, complaining that the desks and chairs were in a terrible state of disrepair and had become a big distraction to learning. An update was long overdue! The school serves about 300 children and adolescents from kindergarten through middle school, from lower income neighborhoods of Fortaleza, Brazil and a variety of ethnic groups. The Province of Fortaleza applied for and was awarded a grant from the VSO to replace these obsolete desks. The clean lines and bright colors of the new desks create a cheerful learning environment. The makeover shows the children

and parents care for the wellbeing of the students and the importance of school. The improvement to the learning environment reinforces the value of beauty for the spiritual wellbeing of the children. And now in their updated classroom, the children's attention to teachers and lessons has gotten better, so too their academic performance is sure to improve!



Upper level classroom

The VSO is grateful to the donors and agencies that make our work possible, including:

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