



7 September 2021

Report on the VSO Forum on Vincentian Development 2021

The VSO delivered the Forum on Vincentian Development, May 25-July 2. The participants received ten-two hour and thirty minute sessions in English and over Zoom Teleconference. Initially, 63 participants were registered from four Visitors' Conferences, COVIAM, APVC, CEVIM, and CLAPVI. As the Forum began, the actual number of participants fell to 54 (see Table A: Registered Participants by Visitor's Conference). The goal of the training was to increase the number of confreres who have training as project managers for work in Vincentian development and to become better collaborators with the VSO. The majority of participants were confreres, many were new to project management. Several were lay collaborators, both men and women. The cost per participant was \$176 USD, including the stipend for the presenter and the use of AVISHA online platform.<sup>1</sup> Each participant was sponsored by a VSO grant.

The goal of the Forum was as follows: To introduce project-based fundraising for mission work with the VSO to design a project with a clear problem and solution; to develop a budget and funding plan; and to incorporate methods of management and evaluation, terminating in a report to the funding agencies and VSO.

Objectives:

- a. To introduce as many confreres as possible to training as project managers
- b. To reinforce learning and capacities in four principal areas of project-based fundraising: (1) project design; (2) implementation; (3) monitoring and evaluation; and (4) reporting.
- c. To engage participants in adult learning in live online sessions with a case-study assignment leading to the completion of a VSO Application and evaluation by a VSO mentor.

**Table A: Registered Participants by Visitor's Conference**

<b>REGISTRANTS BY CONFERENCE</b>	
APVC	22
COVIAM	25
CEVIM	6
CLAPVI*	1
<b>REGISTRANTS BY VOCATION</b>	
Confreres	49
Lay collaborators	5
Total	54

<sup>1</sup> The total cost of the Forum training for 54 participants was \$9500 USD.

## Evaluation of Forum

The VSO evaluated the Forum based on the Pre-Forum and Post-Forum surveys, and a Post-Forum focus group of four participants. The survey questions focused on increasing competency in 16 learning objectives for successful project management. The focus group complemented the survey by raising matters of organization, effectiveness of presenter, method of instruction, and value of case study assignment. The Pre-Forum survey revealed the following about the knowledge of the confreres: Basic 67.5%; Intermediate 25%; and Advanced 7.5%. For most participants, it was their first exposure to comprehensive training for project-based fundraising in all its components. The Post-Forum survey revealed that both beginners and intermediate participants gained knowledge from the Forum. For the purpose of clarity, the VSO makes a distinction between registrants (63) and actual participants (54) who attended one or more sessions. The evaluation focused primarily on survey data of participants, as well as the inputs from the VSO staff, presenter, and AVISHA Learning Platform.

### Successes:

- a. The participants felt their expectations were met (Completely 63%; and Somewhat 37%; and 0% Not at All).
- b. Concerning the stated 16 objectives of the training, participants reported high level of satisfaction (Definitely 70 %; and Somewhat 29%; and Not at all 0.5%).
- c. The Post-Forum focus group noted the following: (1) the participants praised the extensive preparation and organization of the sessions by the VSO; (2) they benefitted from the small group sessions; and (3) they reported high satisfaction with the presenter because of his knowledge of project-based fundraising, clarity of presentation (pace, pronunciation, examples given), and method of instruction.

### Challenges:

- a. Each session averaged 42 participants. The VSO reported that 35 participants attended at least 80% of the sessions. Initially the VSO had registered 63, but of that number, 54 attended one or more sessions. It was a challenge to maintain attendance by the 54 participants.
- b. Twelve participants attended three or four sessions (22%).
- c. The case study assignments were attempted by 29 of the 54 participants (53%); of the 29 who attempted the assignments only 9 completed all four of the assignments (16%); and 25 of 54 did not attempt any of the four assignments (46%).

### Recommendations for Future Forum

- a. Improve the small group sharing by providing a group leader and giving more time to the group.
- b. The cohort of participants needs to be smaller and better selected to engage the participants in adult learning.
- c. The mentors and mentee experience can be enhanced by virtual interaction during the Forum sessions.
- d. The training would best be given in one or two time-zones with accommodation for the local time and daily customs, such as, lunch and siesta.

### Conclusion:

The virtual training allowed for a cost-effective delivery of a successful training experience for many confreres and lay collaborators. The VSO had decided to train the maximum number of confreres, in an English language training, on project management. Among the large number of participants (54), there was included a sizeable number of those who were minimally engaged (12). The extension of the training to numerous confreres and lay collaborators diminished the benefits of adult learning. Yet, there was a highly motivated group of 34 participants.<sup>2</sup> Adult learning method of instruction served best those who completed the assignments, therefore those who learned by doing. Best practices for engaging in adult learning warrants a smaller cohort of twenty participants who have a project to work on. The VSO would do well to work with the visitors to recruit a smaller number of motivated participants who have a stake in the

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<sup>2</sup> The VSO defines highly motivated participant as follows: 42 participants attended 7 or more sessions. We used the factor of .08 to determine a cohort of highly motivated, which is 34.

outcomes. The smaller group would allow for better interactions among the participants in group discussions, and fewer numbers would provide for closer mentoring of case study assignments.

To close, the VSO has initiated a process to engage the visitors' conference of CLAPVI for the purpose of delivering a Spanish language virtual Forum on Vincentian Development next year 2022.

### Photos



Fr. Marc Gasasira, C.M.,  
Region of Rwanda;



Fr. Nader Charbel, C.M.,  
Province of Orient



Fr. Peter Pham Minh  
Trieu, C.M. Province  
of Vietnam



Fr. Gerald Borja, C.M.  
Province of Philippines



Fr. Guénolé, Feugang, C.M., Visitor,  
Vice-Province of Cameroon

### Quotes from participants:

*"Allow me to express my profound gratitude to you, to the entire VSO staff and to the presenter for the training on the project management."*

*~Fr. Guénolé Feugang, C.M., Vice-Province of Cameroon*

*"Thank you for the class. For it was a great guide for us for writing projects in the future."*

*~ Fr. Stephen Maliyakal, C.M., Province of South India*

*"Many ... thanks and appreciation for the wonderful training program. I am sure to make use of this learning for the good of the poor through my newly erected Region of Northeast India."*

*~Fr. Babu Sebastian, C.M., Region of Northeast India*

*" A big thank you and congratulatory note for arranging a well thought out project development sessions."*

*Fr. Pravash Joseph, C.M., Province of North India*

By Fr. Gregory J. Semeniuk, C.M.  
Executive Director VSO