



Vincentian Solidarity Office

May 2022 Bulletin

Lights on Burundi

The Churches of the parish of Rwisabi had no electricity. In fact, electricity just does not exist in this rural part of Burundi at all. No one has it. At the Church this means there are no services or meetings in the evenings. At homes, this means no studying at night for children. Only half the people here even finish primary school. Residents must endure a high level of crime. Without lights, it is easy for thieves to sneak around.

The Vincentian Fathers charged with the Parish, headed by Fr. Jean de Dieu Nizeyimana knew there had to be a way to fix this. They decided to go solar. With a little help they acquired everything necessary for the Parish Chapel, Church and office to be powered by Solar energy. They were even able to get 60 small residential systems for some of the parishioners. These small 13volt home systems are capable of powering multiple lights and a small efficient appliance like a fan or television. Each has 2 USB ports and allows for mobile phone charging. They are easy to install and maintain. You can just imagine the joy for these 60 households to now have light.

While the main Church is being rebuilt,

the chapel now has lights and a functioning sound system. All who attend Mass can hear the message now. With these improvements, the priests have noticed a gradual increase in Mass attendance. Plus they can now host meetings in the evenings for pastoral and formation groups.

In Burundi, there was darkness, and now there is light.



A local parishioner installing a household system



The Chapel with all lights on in the evening



Rooftop install of solar panels for the Parish offices

A Ray of Light for Grassroots Development

A new project scheme has come to see the light of day starting this year. The VSO and the Mission Fund of the Diocese of Essen have entered a novel funding agreement. Called UPGRADE, "Upending Poverty thru Grassroots Development Project Scheme", it marks a shift in development strategy. The shift is from a transactional application-based funding to a bilateral partnership. This partnership will manage grants and investing resources for our shared development agendas. It will be an upgraded complement to the ongoing VSO micro-project

program. UPGRADE will provide start-up grants (\$15,000 – \$20,000) for small-scale community-based pilot projects. These projects should be in line with the UN-Strategic Development Goals (UN-SDGs). For the initial 3 years of partnership (2022-2024), the grants will focus on: (a) renewable energy; (b) local economy and food security; (c) promoting gender equality/women empowerment.

We will be sharing more details on our website soon, so stay tuned: www.cmglobal.org/vso.

Vincentian Solidarity Office | 500 East Cheltenham Avenue | Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19144 | USA
Telephone: +1 215-713-3998

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. Joel Bernardo, C.M.
Executive Director
Email: jbernardo@cmphlsvs.org

Lauren Lynch, Project Manager
Email: llynch@cmphlsvs.org

Regina Rossi, Executive Assistant
Email: rrossi@cmphlsvs.org

Jill Witmer Sinha, Report Manager
Email: jwsinha@cmphlsvs.org



Vincentian Solidarity Office

www.cmglobal.org/vso

[Click here to give a gift in support of our projects](#)

Provincial House of South India Goes Solar

At the Provincial house in South India, they do have electricity . . . sometimes. Unfortunately, their public utilities are prone to frequent and long shut-offs. Sometimes these blackouts occur without warning in the middle of a meeting and then last for hours. The situation was frustrating. Meetings were cut short, ending abruptly with no idea when they could resume. This building is the administrative center for the South India province. So, all of the province's major meetings, seminars, retreats and

ordinations are held here.

With just a small investment the South India Province was able to install a rooftop solar station that provides power to the Provincial house and offices. The system powers everything at the house: lights, appliances, refrigeration. The electricity is now constant and consistent. They have also realized a large cost savings by using the sun to generate their power supply. The new electric bills are a mere 10% of what they once were.



Fr. Anil Thomas CM, Fr. Jijo Joseph CM, Fr. Tibin Mathew CM, and Fr. Stephen Antony, CM of the South India Province on the roof of the provincial house with new solar panel bank installed.

Chad Saves on More Than Electricity

At the community house in N'Djamena, Chad, the only power came from an old gasoline powered generator. The Vincentians inherited it from the Archdiocese. It was already very old and not expected to run much longer. In fact, when they took over this parish, they thought the Archdiocese was going to replace it. But this never happened.

To be safe and hopefully extend the generator's life, they used it from 6 pm to 10:30 pm. Which means they only had four and half hours of electricity per day. Their neighborhood did not have any other power supply at all. With the help of the VSO they purchased and installed the new solar system. The priests and seminarians living there even helped in the transportation

and installation of the equipment.

The house now has light 24 hours a day. But one of the other big changes they realized was a time and cost savings on food. Now that they have electricity around the clock, they can run a refrigerator and freezer. This allows them to buy food in bulk quantities which are cheaper. The staff gets to spend less time shopping.



Installing the rooftop solar panels

Fr. Joel's Solidarity Notes

Key Pillars of Vincentian Solidarity-Building based on the VSO process: "Top Up" versus "Top Down" approach:

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT/ BUILD UP ("Project-based orientation") → not just about one-off projects but developing the capacity and accountability to enhance eligibility (not automatic entitlement) for grant awards and project partnerships

ASSET DEVELOPMENT/BUILD UP ("Leveraging Process") → not just about funding or fund-raising but mobilizing "solidarity fund schemes" to harness the resources for development as the "patrimony of the poor"

IMPACT DEVELOPMENT/ BUILD UP ("Systemic Change Perspective") → not just about doing charity but consolidating the impacts of development initiatives, starting with micro-projects as "catalysts" of systemic change, in line with Global Development Framework and Thematic Agenda (UN-Strategic Development Goals)

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

The Franz Foundation
 Congregation of the Mission Western Province, USA;
 Congregation of the Mission Eastern Province, USA;
 Congregation of the Mission New England Province, USA;

The ambassador of the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to the Holy See
 Fr. Sy Peterka's Africa Appeal;
 Fr. John Gouldrick, C.M.
 The Provinces and Houses of the Congregation of the Mission who contribute to the Vincentian Solidarity Fund;
 USA Donors;
 And donors to VIMS for their support.



www.VIMS1617.org