



August 21, 2023

Re: Optimizing the Micro-Project Scheme

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Evangelizer of the Poor, be with us always!

The Vincentian Solidarity Office (VSO) aims to maximize the opportunities of the Micro-Project scheme for building development impact on the lives of the poor and vulnerable sectors. Introduced in 2005, funds for the \$5,000 maximum grant per micro-project are pooled from the annual contributions of several provinces that commit to support the works of fellow provinces with less resources for their ministries. Over the years, micro-projects have helped confreres respond to emerging needs and improve their socio-pastoral services to the more disadvantaged sectors.

Given the invaluable benefits of the Micro-Project scheme, the VSO has also come to recognize the emerging risk of minimizing or reducing its opportunities to primarily addressing logistical needs of eligible Vincentian institutions. Moreover, the VSO is impelled by a need to redirect an apparent misperception of the 'one micro-project per year' policy as a mandatory annual entitlement even for routine requests or repetition of similar applications. There seems to be tacit time pressure to apply for the micro-grant due to the limited availability of the annual funds.

The VSO is introducing new guidelines to amplify the potential benefits of the micro-project scheme. Preferential option will be given to micro-projects that can serve as 'catalyst projects' in bringing about significant effects in the immediate and long-term. The micro-grants will be primarily allocated for 'catalyst projects' that can:

- deliver direct services and immediate benefits to the poor,
- address prevalent needs and concerns of the vulnerable sectors,
- initiate social development efforts at grassroots level,
- mobilize collective participation and involvement of key stakeholders,
- contribute to grassroots community building,
- stimulate significant change in the living conditions, public attitudes, power relations, policies and access to opportunities for the poor,
- demonstrate innovative approaches and alternative technologies,
- help address the systemic roots of poverty and inequality,
- build up transformative impact towards the envisioned systemic change,
- be aligned to Global Development Goals (UN-SDGs),
- advance and scale up the Vincentian work of solidarity with and for the poor.

The VSO Micro-project scheme will focus on 'priority sectors' that are in line with the UN-Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs), particularly: Environment and Food Security, Clean Energy and

alternative sources, Socio-Economic promotion, Education, Health Care, Water and Sanitation, Social protection and inclusion of the vulnerable groups (women, children, youth, disabled, elderly, migrants and refugees). The micro-grant cannot be used for emergency or relief assistance and individualized benefits (e.g. school fees and scholarships), administrative and running costs, expenditures incurred before the approval of the micro-project.

With a renewed perspective to prioritize the development agenda of the poor, we enjoin confreres from eligible provinces, vice-provinces, regions and international missions to submit applications for micro-project grants based on the new guidelines. The outstanding application procedures are still to be followed.

We look forward to working with you on making micro-projects become 'catalyst projects' that can build up Vincentian Solidarity and Systemic Change from bottom up.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'J. Bernardo', written in a cursive style.

Fr. Joel Bernardo, C.M.  
Executive Director