



Vincentian Solidarity Office

November 2023 Bulletin

Building Safer Shelter for Shanty-Dwellers in Guatemala

Guatemalans are said to be hard-working, kind people who deeply value their family ties. Unfortunately, their country has experienced a number of natural disasters in recent years. Before that, there was a long civil war. The lack of jobs or available land in rural areas caused many to migrate to Guatemala City, the country's capital, and the largest city in Central America. These rural migrants, unable to find or afford existing housing have put together make-shift homes in the least desirable places within Guatemala City. Using tin, cardboard, and plastic they construct dwellings on the steep slopes of the city's ravines. Many are built near trash dumps.

The Province of Central America serves Guatemala (and surrounding countries). The Visitor, Fr. Rafael Presidente Arévalo, CM, and his fellow confreres from St. Vincent de Paul Parish became acquainted with some of the families living in these deplorable conditions. They embarked on a project to improve the living conditions of several families. One family had no access to their own home and had to ask other families for permission to use their staircases to reach their own door. Most people living here have earthen floors and the tin roofs do not age well.

So with funds from the province and VSO and donated bricks from a local company, five families were helped with housing improvements. These included tile floors, updated roofs, and a staircase for the family who had none.

Despite setbacks during the rainy season, and sometimes having to carry materials up 60 steps, all work was completed this past August.

The five families helped by this project are now properly protected from the rain. They have proper floors and stairs to access their homes.



Photos clockwise: outside view of one house; Fr Presidente on the new steps; one of the families celebrates the completion of home improvements, every family member helped with work, here one of the younger members helps with moving bricks down the steps.



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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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Vincentian Solidarity Office

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Replenishing Water and Trees in Northeast India

In Molkon and Natjang villages in the Region of Northeast India, seasonal water shortages have been severe for the last several years. The water shortage causes illnesses that can be fatal to some people. In order to improve the village's situation, Fr. Babu Sebastian, CM and the local community built water tanks to collect water and installed a system of pipes that bring the water to the school and surrounding community. A local vendor sold him the pipes at a great discount which will enable him to add an extra tank in the near future. In addition to the water tanks, Fr. Babu set out to make the project even more sustainable.

1200 trees were planted to fight the deforestation that has been occurring in the area. He also partnered with the local Forestry department to have seminars to educate the local population on the importance of trees to the local water supply. Finally, he started a club at St. Vincent de Paul School which will be focused on ecological activities. The children in the club will learn more about the importance of trees and clean water. They will participate in village clean-ups, helping to rid the village of trash and plastics. In this way, future generations will be good stewards of the work done today.



Photo above: community members carrying pipes for water system. Below: children hold up their new saplings to be planted at home



Photos above and below from each parish on goat distribution day



Raising Goats and Young Heroes in Rwanda

Goats are very important to people in Rwanda. They supply milk, food, fertilizer and even fuel. They are less expensive to raise than cows and they can graze where other animals cannot. Additionally, Rwandans believe goat milk is more nutritious than cow's milk. For these reasons, the Vincentians in the parishes of Mata-Gitongati and Gitare Rwanda, led by Fr. Marc Gasasira, CM, designed a project that gave a goat to each member of the local Marian Youth Group. In all, 104

young people aged 7 to 15 received a goat. Along with the goat, the youth and their parents received training on the care and feeding of the goats led by a local veterinarian and other experts in goat raising. The youth also helped in the construction of the stables for the goats. As the goats breed and multiply, each member gives a young goat to members living in their communities who are in need. In this way, the young people are learning skills and the importance of helping others.

Fr. Joel's Solidarity Notes

Solidarity Builds Impact

We can build solidarity to create sustainable and scalable impact through targeted project design and management. Key tactical steps are as follows:

- Assess problems first before finding outright solutions.
- Focus on needs not wants.
- Address causes not just effects.

- Aim for consolidated Impact not just isolated outputs.
- Do projects not just conduct activities.
- Create continuing processes not just finished products.
- Build up eligibility not outright entitlement.
- Build accountability not just capacity.

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

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