



Vincentian Solidarity Office

February 2024 Bulletin

Enabling Environment for Harmonious Integration of Young Refugees in Rwanda

The Mahama Refugee Camp in Rwanda is a small city now. Established in 2015 for Burundian and Congolese refugees fleeing violence in their home countries, it is now home to well over 50,000 people. Over half of them are under the age of 18.

Vincentians from the Region of Rwanda-Burundi serve the people here, tending to their pastoral needs. Their mission is to increase the hope and potential among the young people by providing them with resources and structure through Catholic and cultural training. Athletic activities that increase their discipline and respect for each other encourage participation.

VSO funds were used to build a hall where classes and training can take place. Previously, they used an open-air pavilion for this purpose. Now they have a large permanent structure that has many uses.

Construction began in May 2023 and was completed by October 2023.

Fr. Samuel Ngendakumana, CM, and his collaborators planned and supervised tournaments in various team sports, talent shows and other cultural activities. At least 2000 children and young people participated. The children received catechism classes where they learned about love, self-respect, sharing, the power of prayer and the Word of God. They also had training in avoiding activities that might lead to their involvement in drug use, violence, HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies.

“The cultural, language, and life skills courses, along with the athletic activities, will provide an ideal situation to improve the peaceful coexistence in the camp. Allowing children and young people the opportunity to learn and play together will encourage trust and reduce insecurity between different ethnic or religious groups,” reports Fr. Samuel.



Above: Catechists on Confirmation day;

Below: Younger children receive juice and cookies



Volleyball tournament

Fr. Joel's Solidarity Notes

Grassroots Development Initiatives can become 'boosters' of Solidarity. Here are 5 A's to consider:

ALIGN Grassroots Initiatives with the Global Agendas of Peace, Justice and Development.

ADDRESS poverty and under-development as triggers of conflict, violence and injustice.

ACCOUNT for the voices of the vulnerable and most affected.

ADOPT the local knowledge and practices of communal resilience.

AMPLIFY the cumulative impact from access to services leading to structural reforms.

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

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Vincentian Solidarity Office

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Empowering Indigenous Youth as Ecological Guardians in Honduras

Climate change constantly creates new challenges for farmers. The increase of forest fires and flash floods threaten to ruin crops. The Vincentians of the Region of Honduras, a place particularly vulnerable to these threats, are doing their part to help the indigenous people adapt.

Tasba Pranakira Project, aimed at local indigenous high school and university students, was designed so local youth would receive practical and classroom education in sustainable agriculture. Classroom education focuses on adapting to environmental changes and preparing the youth for future leadership roles.

The program went from February to November. Ten local students were chosen to participate. All but one completed the program. In the classroom, the students learned about sustainable agriculture

practices like reforestation, irrigation, forest fire management, environmental protection and indigenous rights to peaceful protection of their land.

Beyond the classroom, the students put in a lot of hard work. They cultivated plots for small produce like melons, radishes, cucumbers, corn and sweet potatoes. They also planted fruit trees like coconut, rambutan and avocado. Pine trees were planted as well to help restore erosion in the vicinity. Additionally, a greenhouse, nursery and well for irrigation were built. Students received a stipend for their participation and a certificate of completion. There are plans to run the program again this year.

These up-and-coming leaders are now prepared to assist their communities in adapting and thriving in spite of their many challenges.



Above: Cucumber harvest

Below: Students of Tasba Pranakira Project



Communal Water Builds Healthy and Peaceful Village Communities in Nigeria

Nigeria experiences a dry season from November to March. During this time water supplies are extremely limited. People will often have to go without bathing, cleaning, even drinking. Often what little water is available is not clean. Illnesses are frequent. Children often miss school. Sometimes, villagers bicker over what little supply there is or their place in the queue. Students can be late for school because they must get in line for water before it is gone for the day.

At Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish, Ukwuagba Ngbo in Ebonyi state of eastern Nigeria, there are two streams that run dry during this season. To alleviate the sickness and

suffering, the Vincentians serving this village turned to the VSO for help. Their idea was to drill a borehole and build tanks for the collection of water.

Construction took place during June and July of 2023. The Parish Church will maintain the system going forward. The finished project will supply water to the priest, seminarians, household staff, 100 students at the Parish school, and over a thousand people in the village who now will get through the dry season in peace. Water is a basic human need, but a ready supply for all villagers provides a more peaceful living environment.



Students collecting water

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