



Vincentian Solidarity Office

May 2024 Bulletin

Cameroon: Improving Inclusive Access to Education in the Borderland

Migrants from Central African Republic have fled the political and sectarian violence in their country and arrived in eastern Cameroon. Many are Muslims from the Mbororo minority. The Vincentian Fathers here are already charged with the education of the local indigenous community. The refugees from C.A.R. have dramatically increased the population.

When the St. Vincent de Paul de Belita School in Cameroon first opened, it had no buildings. Classes



The beginning of construction of new classrooms

were held under the trees in the open. Eventually they were able to build three classrooms. Because the population in and around the village in eastern Cameroon has been growing due to the migration, these three classrooms have become very crowded. In 2023

the school, with the help of the VSO, added two more classrooms. The school currently serves 177 children, and the number is growing. Twenty-five percent of the students are migrants from the C.A.R. and attend

the school tuition free. Children from all religions attend the school.

Once the extra classrooms were done, a subsequent project added a lavatory for the students' use which improved sanitation and safety. A borehole well was built to supply the entire village with water throughout the year, especially during the dry season.



Above: Construction nears completion

Below: School children and staff in front of the completed building



Fr. Joel's Solidarity Notes

Marketability of Solidarity

Adopting a 'market perspective' based on the supply-demand logic poses a dual challenge of making solidarity work marketable (demand side) and sustainable (supply side) in the donors' market.

Some strategic steps to consider:

• **Marketing 'option for the poor'** → underscore the preferential option and strategic agendas of the vulnerable groups to be represented, recognized and responded to in the development space and donors' market;

• **Setting marketable demands** → create demands for fundable projects based on relevance, viability, cost-efficiency and impact potentials;

• **Diversifying products and services** → design and develop diversified projects and partnership schemes aligned with major thematic development agendas that are also sensitive to diverse geopolitical contexts;

• **Adopting 'value chain' framework** → appropriate a 'spectrum of development

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 mobilizing resources 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](#)

Cuba: Building Solidarity for Looking After the Elderly

Vincentian Missionaries in Mella, Cuba were looking for a home for themselves as well as a way to help some elderly people in the area. These elderly people were suffering from hunger, loneliness and isolation since large numbers of locals have emigrated to look for work elsewhere in Cuba and abroad.

The Fathers were able to secure a small existing house which they plan to renovate. So far, they have been able to turn part of the house into a residence for themselves. They also improved the kitchen and with the help of some local parishioners have set up a

feeding program for 25 elderly individuals. The meals are prepared in the kitchen and then the food is delivered to them in their homes. However, they have plans to continue renovations so that a portion of the house becomes a dining hall where the elderly residents can gather and socialize so as to alleviate their isolation and loneliness. Unfortunately, due to significant inflation and the post-covid financial crisis in Cuba, these plans have been delayed



Above: A participant finishes the meal delivered by parishioners



Right: Fr. Jose Orlando Escobar Ruiz hands out meals prepared in the new kitchen



Above: New shelving stocked with food

Below: Kitchen with all new equipment



Ukraine: Serving Hearty Meals with Dignity Under the Shadow of War

In Perechyn, Ukraine the Vincentians already had an established program for feeding the elderly. These elderly do receive a pension, but it is not enough to meet all their needs. At the Parish's "Kitchen for the Poor", dinners are prepared and then delivered to the homes of those in need. In recent times the need has increased. The war in Ukraine has brought more people to this vicinity in the western part of the country. The old kitchen was designed for home use and so, was inefficient. With a micro-project grant from

the VSO, the missionaries had the kitchen renovated.

They bought all new commercial ovens, stoves, a sink, a meat grinder and refrigerator. New plumbing and wiring were installed. They also got new tables and shelves and added a fresh coat of paint. The sanitary conditions were much improved. The kitchen now serves 50 dinners six times a week. The Vincentian Fathers feel the renovations have greatly improved their service.

Fr. Joel's Solidarity Notes

Continued from first page

framework' (rather than a 'piecemeal approach') by progressing from (*continued*) conventional charities (social service provision, crisis-intervention, humanitarian responses) to addressing critical cross-cutting development issues;

• **Employing marketable concepts and boosters** → reinforce project designs and proposals with dynamic development concepts for boosting fundability such as: contextual relevance

(broader socio-political contexts of critical development agendas); transformative perspectives (Rights-based, Social Justice, Systemic Change); alternative technologies (innovation, improvisation and cultural sensitivity); and grassroots approaches (participatory development processes);

• **Pilot testing and prototyping alternatives** → design and implement innovative 'model projects' for demonstrating alternative approaches to strategic development agendas and for setting replicable precedents for cross-cultural learning and scaling up in broader regional contexts.

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

The Franz Foundation;
The Diocese of Essen, Germany
Congregation of the Mission Western Province, USA;
Congregation of the Mission Eastern Province, USA;

Congregation of the Mission New England Province, USA;
Fr. Sy Peterka's Africa Appeal;
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