



AFRICA SUFFERING AND MOVING...

Where Solidarity is Essential

The tremendous extent of poverty throughout Africa, makes it a *de facto* priority in Council General's work. This issue of Confeder@tioNews gives a snapshot of some of our activities there. The work mentioned here, carried out with the support of Council General is only a small part of what Vincentians are doing in the continent: the Society is present in 47 African countries, with more than 5,000 Conferences and 105,000 Vincentians working day by day to serve the poorest of their countries, and although their means are often limited, this is compensated for by courage and imagination, and several development projects are going on all over the continent: professional training in refugee camps in Sudan, a goat bank in Eritrea, a micro-credit scheme in DR Congo, assistance to child-mothers in Central African Republic, polyvalent farm in Zambia... are only a few examples.

TTC Assistance on-going ...

Council General, through its Territorial Technical Commission (TTC) keeps on assisting the Vincentians in Africa. Here is an overview of some of the projects that have been recently funded by TTC.

Democratic Republic of Congo



The situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo is particularly difficult, as extreme poverty is much worsened by the extremely violent rebel war and armed conflicts, in much of the country.

Les régions du Kivu et de Goma et Boma sont particulièrement exposées. The region of Bukavu was affected by an earthquake, in a region already devastated by war and violence.

CGI made various contributions to assist in the region, helping to purchase and distribute very basic items to those who have lost everything: tarpaulins for temporary shelters, pots and pans, blankets, buckets, food and water, etc.

A special fund was also sent to assist raped and mutilated women: small amounts of money have been given to 30 of them to help them start some small businesses. They were also given some flour. They received all this support with great emotion, and said it gave them hope and trust in the love of God. The North Kivu region also requested and obtained CGI assistance, because of the terrible violence of the war there: houses sacked, women raped, murders, death of lots of Vincentians: 96 orphans were left behind after one single massacre that killed 25 families of Vincentians in Kiwanja. The Vincentians still find the courage to assist 900 families who need food, clothes, blankets, kitchen items.

Uganda for Kenyan Refugees:

At the moment, there are thousands of Kenyan refugees in Kiryandongo, a displaced camp at the border with Kenya, in Uganda. This includes children and babies.

SSVP Uganda is currently carrying out the third phase of assistance to them, supported by CGI: Phase one consisted in supplying them with blankets, mosquito nets, drugs and medicines, soap.

Phase two was a 'Top-up', requested to supply hoes and pangas, further supplies of mosquito nets, salt, soap and blankets. The disaster committee visited Kiryandongo and delivered 1200 hoes, 1000 pangas, 10 bales of blankets and 3 tons of edible salt. By supplying the hoes and pangas, SSVP provided, as it were – 'the fishing rod rather than the fish' as the hoes enable them to till their land and build their houses. Phase three, approved at the February TTC meeting, will be starting soon, to provide school uniforms and other school materials for the children at the camp.



These are only two examples, as assistance projects supported by the Technical Commission are ongoing in Zimbabwe, to fight the combined effects of last year's floods and of the recent, huge cholera epidemic (distribution of cooking oil, sugar beans, salt, green laundry soap, water treatment tablets, maize meal, etc), but also in Ghana (helping the farmers to get back to work after floods) and elsewhere in Africa.

In total, in 2008, the TTC has sent over 230,000 €—not including the work of the African Commission - to 13 African countries, about 45% of the total funds spent by the Commission that year. Unfortunately most of these funds have been sent to manage the aftermath of natural or human disasters, not only for distribution of emergency items, food or medicines, but also with longer term plans with rehabilitation and reconstruction projects, distribution of tools and crops to help farmers get back to work.

This is an opportunity to congratulate and thank all the Vincentians in Africa who courageously bring their service and assistance to the poor. We also thank all those who allow the TTC to bring this assistance: the members of the national Boards, our International Territorial Vice-Presidents and Coordinators, as well as our TTC correspondents with Africa.

African Commission Projects

As you know CGI is especially involved in the fight against poverty, giving the Society the resources to deal with it all over the world. Nevertheless, the specific and extreme situation of Africa led CGI to create, the African Commission in late 2006, to assist the African SSVP to establish specific projects.

Here is a summarized progress report, at the end of year 2, giving a short description of each of the projects funded.

For SSVP Guinea-Bissau, a truck was purchased to help with the pick-up and delivery of welfare and emergency relief (food, medicines, etc) and should allow Vincentian help to reach hundreds of people previously isolated.

In Zambia, the Commission funded a farm project, aimed at producing food: the project is up and running, and has had a satisfactory start. In Liberia, the same kind of project is still waiting for formal approval by the local international and national structure, for all guarantees need to be assured before funding can be effective.

In Madagascar, the Commission supported the establishment of a bee keeping project (picture). This project is multi purpose, and aims at training the needy peasants, child-mothers and unemployed boys to earn their living through bee keeping, with the formation they receive. The project also includes all the products of apiculture: honey, wax, hydromel, production and sale of baked goods. In addition, it plans to plant trees for the bees, so that the project can be self-sufficient . The forecasts are for 100 students trained and 500 trees planted a year.



In Senegal, a pig farming project is in hand, including the construction of pigsties, the purchase of breeding stock and the sale of meat. Both projects have started satisfactorily and are aimed at being rapidly self-sufficient.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the project consists in producing and selling craft work to fund children's education. It is run by the Conference of St Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus, membership of which comprises mostly disabled ladies. They developed the project under the motto "we are physically disabled; we do not want our children to be educationally handicapped". Not only does funding assist with children's education, but also involves the ladies in a useful and valuable project that develops their own self worth and gives them the dignity of working for their children's education, breaking the circle of poverty.



The last project is in Congo Brazzaville. It was inaugurated on January 11th, 2009 and plans to teach these young mothers, who have been raped or abandoned by their families, a trade in needlework, embroidery, aprons, table cloths, sleeved vests, camisoles and knitting producing goods for sale during and after their apprenticeship. This training will give these young mothers an opportunity to take charge of their lives. The training project will provide a trainer, sewing machines, scissors, laundry irons, etc. The project will contribute to their financial independence and self employment which will give them stable and long term remuneration.

Training will take place in a room available rent free for a period of 5 years. Trainers have professional qualifications and experience. The goods produced will be distributed in bulk to certain shops in the towns and also sold in country and town markets. At festival time, orders will be taken from associations and groups. Markets are the best distribution points as the country is under developed where manufacturing products are expensive.

In Nigeria, the Commission has supported the completion of the "Ozanam house" in Lagos, which is operated together with the Daughters of Charity and provides temporary emergency accommodation for displaced families, and skills training.

In Sao Tome, the project is focussing on the formation and training of SSVP members, to ensure the best service to the poor.

We wish all these projects and those to come the greatest success, so that the good work of the Society continues to improve, and the poor are best served to to help them break the circle of poverty.



Fight against AIDS: DREAM project in Kenya

“DREAM, Drug Resource Enhancement against AIDS and Malnutrition, is nothing less than a dream come true. The dream of a different approach to AIDS (an approach combining prevention and treatment), the dream of a new approach to the entire world of African health services (an approach that has broken free from the chains of pessimism and resignation). The reality is that the presence of AIDS in Africa is linked to other problems: poverty, malnutrition, tuberculosis, malaria, and poor levels of health education, to cite a few examples. Focusing on HIV infection to the exclusion of this context is impossible. The struggle against AIDS, therefore, could well become the benchmark of a more responsible, more human globalization, of a commitment to counter the growing international indifference about Africa.”

These are the words of the lay Italian Community of Sant’Egidio who designed, piloted and now supervise the DREAM programme in 10 African countries.

DREAM – Nairobi opened its doors to the first patients in May 2008 through the partnership efforts of many people. The nutrition element of DREAM is a collaborative effort between the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Kenya and the Daughters of Charity who administer the DREAM centre on a daily basis. Providing adequate nutrition is a feature of DREAM and makes a world of difference to people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. All pregnant mothers, children, the frail and elderly receive food automatically. All others receive food based on different criteria.

The beneficiaries receive beans, sugar, maize, rice, flour, cooking oil, etc. Porridge consists of millet, ground nuts, maize, soya. Children also receive milk. All of the food ingredients listed above are purchased from the open market, and packaged in brown paper bags to help Kenya get rid of plastic bags.



145 persons have received nutritional supplementation in the first 6 months of DREAM-Nairobi. Currently 99 persons are on nutritional supplementation: 36 adults, 40 children, 23 pregnant women.. 50 extra persons who reached an appropriate level of nutrition are still continued on food supplements indefinitely because of their poverty situation.

500 patients are expected on DREAM to receive nutritional supplementation in 2009, along with a further 150 frail or vulnerable persons. We are becoming better known in the community and more and more people are coming to the Center to be tested and treated. The costs based on this year will almost double with the increase in price for food generally in Kenya and elsewhere

Help us to support the Society

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