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Spiritan Mission and Development in a Rapidly Changing World

Michael Begley CSSp

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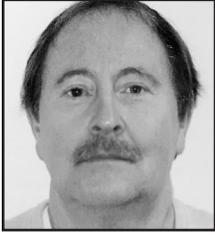


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SPIRITAN MISSION AND DEVELOPMENT IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD

INTRODUCTION

A previous contribution made by Ray Sylvester of SOMA in the USA, was published by *Spiritan Horizons* in its fall edition of 2020¹ with a focus on the long-term viability of the Congregation's mission outreach. He highlighted the competition for available funding, the importance of results for donors, the need to protect physical assets through routine maintenance, and the necessity for a plan to achieve a sustainable future. Mindful that the *Spiritan Rule of Life* and the recent General Chapter of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, GC XXI, provide fundamental orientations around our development outlook, this article is structured around five themes. They include the *Spiritan* developmental legacy; the triple global threats impacting on developmental priorities and fundraising; the developmental structures within the Congregation of the Holy Spirit; an analysis of the funds recently distributed through our development offices and mission appeals programs; and some suggestions for resilience and sustainability building into the future. This article benefits from updated information² provided by our Central Development Office (CDO) and our Development Support Offices. The data on the annual mission appeals programs in the British, Irish and US Provinces was provided by their respective administrators.³

DEVELOPMENTAL LEGACY

Claude François Poullart des Places and François Marie- Paul Libermann were the co-founders of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit

1. Sylvester, R., Mission Works, Donors, Challenges. *Spiritan Horizons*, 2020, 16. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-horizons/vol16/iss16/11>.
2. Updated information and statistical data from the CDO were provided by Kenneth Okoli, CSSp, while similar information on the DSO's Updated information were provided by Ray Sylvester of SOMA, Christian Roberti, CSSp of KIBANDA, Chika Onyejiuwa, CSSp of CESS, Ines Souta of SOLSEF, and Connie O'Halloran of the IODO.
3. Updated Information and statistical data on the annual mission appeals programs run by the British, Irish and US Provinces were provided by Jessica Da Silva, Ann-Marie Reid and Grainne O'Rourke, and Judith Arbes.

under the protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Although very different in personality and skill sets, they both shared a deep sense of spirituality, a background in the formation of seminarians, and made radical vocational choices in their lives.

Claude François Poullart des Places (1679-1709) started his studies for the priesthood at the Jesuit College in Paris. Conscious that poorer seminarians enrolled in this College faced numerous financial difficulties, he took the innovative step of providing accommodation for “poor scholars”. His residence and formation facility initially catered for twelve seminarians under his tutoring and spiritual care. Des Places and his group of twelve seminarians, consecrated their lives to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday, 1703. Shortly afterwards, des Places died (October 2, 1709) leaving an enduring example of the spirit of founding, solidarity, and simplicity of lifestyle, especially favoring impoverished students.

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François Marie-Paul Libermann (1802-52) founded the Society of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1841, which was initially devoted to the welfare of slaves, primarily in Francophone Africa. On September 26, 1848, the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary was integrated into the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. Libermann’s administrative acumen, patient persistence, missionary outreach, his spirituality of apostolic availability and presence amongst the poor, added a strong missionary identity and developmental thrust to our Congregation.

Over the years, a long-standing tradition emerged of members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit assisting the Universal Church in its local leadership and shepherding functions. Since 1767, 222 members of the Spiritan family have provided 2 Cardinals, 46 Archbishops, 128 Bishops or Apostolic Vicars, and 46 other Prelates to guide the administrative and pastoral development of various categories of ecclesiastical jurisdictions.⁴ Of these, 48 are still living while four Spiritans presently fulfill important roles at the Episcopal Conference level. Two Spiritans currently exercise the role of Secretary General for the Episcopal Conference of Lesotho and the Episcopal Conference of Angola and São Tomé. Two others fulfill the functions of President of the Episcopal Conference of the Indian Ocean and Vice-President of the Episcopal Conference of Paraguay.

Throughout a little more than three centuries of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit’s history, numerous Spiritans have demonstrated a remarkable aptitude for developmental innovation and social entrepreneurship. While these attributes primarily occurred at the lo-

4. Retrieved from <http://www.gcatholic.org/orders/013.htm>.

*Aengus
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Universal*

cal level, they have also extended to regional, national, and international levels. One example relates to the introduction of arabica coffee trees from the Island of Reunion to Kenya by the French “Holy Ghost Fathers” in 1893.⁵ They were first cultivated at Bura in the Taita Hills and subsequently in Nairobi and the surrounding areas. Today, Kenya is a major exporter of coffee worldwide.

In the tradition of their predecessors, recent members of the congregation founded multiple Associations and NGO Organizations with a humanitarian and human rights orientation. Aengus and Jack Finucane were central figures in the founding of Concern Universal, an Irish humanitarian organization with an international remit. A recent installation honoring their different but complementary roles can be seen in Figure 1.

Fig. 1



Constructed from steel and stone and strategically located at Barrington’s Pier on the River Shannon near Limerick City in

5. Kieran, J.A. (1969). ‘The Origins of Commercial Arabic Coffee Production in East Africa’. *Journal of African Historical Studies: vol. 12,1,51-67.*

Some other examples of organizations founded by Irish Spiritans include: Aidlink, A Partnership with Africa, Concern Universal, Refugee Trust, Spiritan Asylum Services Initiative (SPIRASI), and the World Mercy Fund.

Ireland, it depicts two remarkable but very different Spiritans. One brother is sitting down in a pensive stance while the other is featured actively pushing open a narrow gap of light against a wall of opposition. The inscription reads: “Aengus Finucane (1932-2009) and Jack Finucane (1937-2017): Humanitarians and proud Limerick men, Aengus and Jack, stand for the best of who we are as a nation embodying and promoting a spirit of humanity, dignity, and equality. Through their lifelong commitment to Concern Worldwide, they challenged the inevitability of poverty in defiance of accepted thinking. Through their courage, drive, and leadership, they saved and transformed the lives of millions of people.”

Some other examples of organizations founded by Irish Spiritans include: Aidlink, A Partnership with Africa, Concern Universal, Refugee Trust, Spiritan Asylum Services Initiative (SPIRASI), and the World Mercy Fund. Others are the Association of the Peasants of Fondwa in Haiti, Apprentices of Auteuil Foundation in France, Daniel Brottier Association in the Republic of Mauritania, Revive Refugee Association in the UK, the former Sharelink- Spiritan Worldwide Aid Foundation in the USA, Spiritan Community Outreach Ethiopia (SCORE), the Trinidad and Tobago Development Foundation, and Servol in Trinidad and Tobago. Such organizations mainly emerged from crisis situations and respond to the humanitarian and long-term developmental needs of disadvantaged populations across the globe.

Today, 2,729 members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit work in more than 60 countries worldwide. The 2013 edition of the Spiritan Rule of Life (SRL) defines the primary purpose of our mission within the universal church as the evangelization of the poor. In doing so, it adds the following specifications: “Therefore we go especially to peoples, groups and individuals who have not yet heard the message of the Gospel or who have scarcely heard it, to those whose needs are greatest, and to the oppressed. We also willingly accept tasks for which the Church has difficulty in finding works.”⁶ SRL also highlights “the integral liberation of people, action for justice and peace, and participation in development as integral to our mission of evangelization.”⁷ Work with refugees, immigrants, and those on the margins of society are considered especially important tasks in our contemporary world.”⁸

6. Congregation of the Holy Spirit. (2013). *Spiritans Rule of Life*. Rome: Spiritan Publications, 4.

7. *Ibid.*, 14.

8. *Ibid.*, 18.1.

THE IMPACT OF THREE GLOBAL CRISES ON FUNDRAISING

The COVID-19 statistics are staggering with 222 countries impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. According to the World Health Organization Dashboard as of April 12, 2023, there have been 762,791,152 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 6,897,025 deaths recorded worldwide.⁹ Guided by public health advice, a global sense of collective commitment and collaboration led to an intensification of national vaccination programs. As of April 11, 2023, a total of 12,340,343,269 vaccine doses had been administered.¹⁰ However, in the introduction to the UN Annual Report 2022, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres noted that less than 20% of low-income countries were vaccinated. This points to an issue of vaccine inequity and consequently, recovery for poorer nations remains uneven.¹¹ A similar problem of access to the new antiviral drugs like Pfizer's Paxlovid and Merck's Molnupivavir remains a global ethical problem. The WHO slogan puts it well: "None of us are safe until all of us are safe."

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*Covid-19
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the charity
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Europe
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Almost everybody, everywhere in the world, now knows that the burdens associated with social distancing, lockdowns and other public health measures have had significant psychosocial and mental health implications. Apart from the medical and psychosocial consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic, the impact on our wider economies was also significant. Non-profit organizations like our development support offices (DSO's) equally faced a few difficult years in their intermediation and fund-raising services. Many annual traditional fundraising opportunities were not possible while NGOs across Europe and North America typically switched to enhanced digital initiatives not only for meetings but also for fundraising purposes. COVID-19 has transformed the charity sector across Europe leaving non-profits facing a critical funding crisis. For instance, the European Fundraising Association published a report in 2020 entitled "The Impact of COVID-19 on Nonprofits in Europe".¹² This study surveyed 797 representatives in 26 countries across Europe in late 2020. It concluded that nonprofit organizations were hard hit in terms of revenues while

9. WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard retrieved from <https://covid19.who.int/>.

10. *Ibid.*, retrieved from <https://covid19.who.int/>.

11. World Health Organization. (2022). United Nations Annual Report 2022: *Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization*. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/annualreport/index.html,1>

12. European Fundraising Association. (2020). *The Impact of COVID-19 on Nonprofits in Europe*. Retrieved from <https://efa-net.eu/resources/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-nonprofits-in-Europe>.

These projects demonstrate the resolve of Spiritans in difficult times and the importance of resilience.

digital channels became increasingly important. 84% of respondents prioritized emails, 75% social media platforms and messaging, and 70% revamped their websites. About one-third (34%) of nonprofits indicated a fall-off in money donated while the need for diversification into the future was stressed. Likewise, many partner agencies associated with supporting missionary bodies typically experienced a fall in revenue and re-orientated their funding priorities. From the perspective of a project applicant, the time taken to process new applications has greatly increased while developmental funding is more difficult to source. Additionally, many agencies have changed their funding priorities while some funding organizations had to postpone the processing of new applications.

Despite these circumstances, Spiritan missionaries responded proactively in their mission settings. Four examples of projects funded by Kibanda during 2021 are illustrative. Florian Pachel Mbabe CSSp, the Director of the Daniel Brottier Association at Nouadhibou, in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, implemented a 'COVID-19 Emergency Health and Food Aid' for Migrants and Refugees. Likewise, Gaudence Mushi CSSp, the Pastor of Ngorongoro Parish in the Republic of Tanzania, focused on a similar COVID-19 'Food Security and Preventative Program' amongst the nomadic Maasai pastoralists in the Ngorongoro region in northern Tanzania. Maxwell Atuguba CSSp, the coordinator of the Tangulbei Divisional Medical Program, initiated an 'Educational and Food Security' project amongst the pastoralist Pokot in north-central Kenya. John Bosco Kamoga CSSp, facilitated a novel youth orientated project to 'Mitigate Against Some of the Adverse Psychosocial Impacts of the spread of the Coronavirus' in a rural township 40 kms from Kampala in Uganda. These projects demonstrate the resolve of Spiritans in difficult times and the importance of resilience.

Just as countries were recovering after the acute phase of the coronavirus pandemic which occurred abruptly and suddenly, so did the Russian invasion of Ukraine occur on February 24, 2022. Over the past year, we have all viewed horrific images of the civilian casualties and the indiscriminate destruction of critical infrastructure on our TV's and social media platforms. Apart from the thousands of deaths and injuries, the UNHCR¹³ has reported that 8,167,986 refugees from the Ukraine have fled their homeland as of April 11, 2023. Likewise, 5,038,365 of these had registered for temporary protection or similar other national protection schemes across Europe. This figure represents approximately 20% of the Ukrainian

13. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2023). Operational Data Portal: Ukraine Refugee Situation. Retrieved from <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/Ukraine>.

While climate related mortality and morbidity statistics are on the increase, it is the poorest and most vulnerable groups in society that are most at risk.

population which was recorded by Eurostat at 40,997,698 at the beginning of 2022.¹⁴ According to the International Organization of Migration, 5,352,000 were estimated to be internally displaced in Ukraine as of January 23, 2023. Additionally, millions more of its citizens have been internally displaced within Ukraine. These figures demonstrate the massive scale of dislocation endured by the people of Ukraine while Spiritans across Europe have also responded, especially in the provision of emergency accommodation and related humanitarian supports for newly arrived refugees from the Ukraine. Unfortunately, the continuation of this war will inevitably have adverse effects for charitable organizations and especially for Spiritan project applicants as billions of euros will have to be redirected for humanitarian support in Ukraine and for its growing refugee diaspora throughout Europe. War is a potent enemy of development.

The third threat relates to climate change. The same level of international collaboration and commitment required to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic will equally be necessary in a sustained manner if the devastating effects of climate change are to be reversed. The associated changes in temperatures and weather patterns and their correlation with the burning of fossil fuels and rising greenhouse gas concentrations demand immediate and sustained action. They include the devastating health deterioration and food insecurity associated with more frequent droughts and the expanding displacement and dislocation of populations. While climate related mortality and morbidity statistics are on the increase, it is the poorest and most vulnerable groups in society that are most at risk. A proliferation of international technical studies, strategies and action plans all continue to make urgent appeals for costly transformative societal change.

The UNEP Emission Gap Report of 2022¹⁵ highlights that large scale interventions are needed including the way we generate electricity for national power grids by shifting to greener alternatives of wind, solar and other renewable sources. The felling of trees and the cutting down of forests to create farms or pastures for animals is a counter-productive activity as the carbon they store is then released into the atmosphere. Deforestation is a significant contributor

14. Eurostat. (2023). Impact Statistics on the War in Ukraine. Retrieved from <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/browser/Ukraine>.

15. United Nations Environment Program (2022). Emissions Gap Report (2022): The Closing Window—Climate Crisis Calls for Rapid Transformation of Societies. Retrieved from <https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2022>.

*To restore
100 million
hectares of
degraded land
to arable land
and in doing
so to transform
millions of
lives through
new economic
opportunities
across the
Sahel area.*

to global gashouse emissions. The World Meteorological Report of 2022¹⁶ puts the equation starkly in stating that “to keep global warming to no more than 1.5°C – as called for in the Paris Agreement- emissions need to be reduced by 45% by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050.”

Initiated in 2007 by the African Union, the ‘Great Green Wall’ initiative¹⁷ is an example of an ambitious, large-scale, macro-level 7,700 km tree-planting project in Africa. It was designed to retard the spread of the Sahara Desert and confront climate change in the largely AZAL belt across West to East Africa. The ultimate success of this project will depend not only on political commitment but also the collaboration of local communities across the targeted twenty-two countries. The primary objectives are to restore 100 million hectares of degraded land to arable land and in doing so to transform millions of lives through new economic opportunities across the Sahel area.

Three examples of ecological and biodiversity small scale Spiritan projects that have already been undertaken are worthy of mention. The first was initiated by Pat Clarke, CSSp and revolves around a ‘Youth and Family Orientated Food-Waste Recycling’ project in an urban slum setting in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The second involved a ‘Tree and Vegetable Planting Project amongst the Pastoralist Maasai’ community at Engikaret and the students at Suma Secondary School in northern Tanzania coordinated by Renatus Karumuna Balthazar CSSp. The third project facilitated by Daniel Waweru CSSp, and his confreres tackled environmental degradation through a ‘Tree Planting’ project in the Kigoma region of Western Tanzania. These showcase what is possible at the local level while into the future, such initiatives will need to be multiplied.

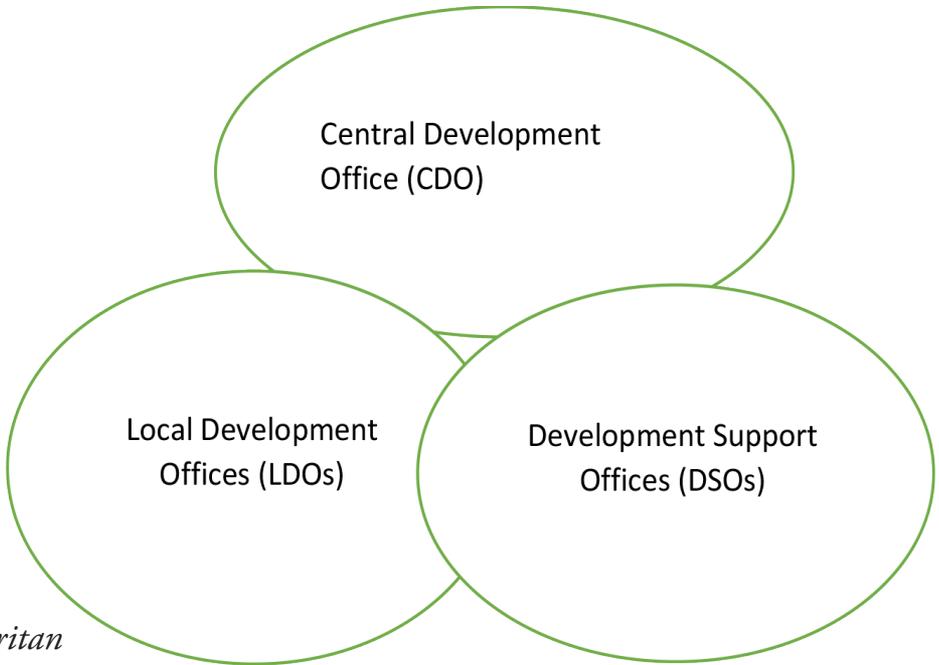
DEVELOPMENTAL STRUCTURES IN THE CONGREGATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Congregation’s development support structures now include a Central Development Office (CDO), Development Support Offices (DSOs) and Local Development Offices (LDOs) as represented in Figure 2.

16. The World Meteorological Organization (2022). State of the Global Climate (2021). Retrieved from <https://www.rmets.org/news/world-meteorological-organization-release-state-global-climate-report-2021>.

17. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The Great Green Wall Initiative. Retrieved from <https://www.unccd.int/our-work/ggwi>.

Figure 2: Spiritan Development Offices



A Spiritan Development Charter was also published by the CDO in 2020 and it focused on how the Spiritans worldwide can contribute to the UN sustainable development goals.

THE CENTRAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

The Enlarged General Council meeting of 2016 made a recommendation to the General Council to create a Central Development Office (CDO) for the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. After the completion of a ‘Feasibility Study for a Spiritan Central Development Office’¹⁸ by Ronan White in 2017, the CDO was officially established in Rome on February 2, 2019, with Philippe Engel, CSSp as its first Director. A document circulated by the Central Development Office cited its two primary goals as the “facilitation, coordination and formation in the field of development and support for self-sufficiency projects in the Congregation’s circumscriptions.”¹⁹ It also listed its nine operational objectives. A Spiritan Development Charter was also published by the CDO in 2020 and it focused on how the Spiritans worldwide can contribute to the UN sustainable development goals. The eight development objectives for the Congregation are:

18. White, R. (2017). “Feasibility Study for A Spiritan Central Development Office”. Rome: Congregation of the Holy Spirit.
19. Central Development Office. (2020). The Central Development Office. Rome: Congregation of the Holy Spirit, 2.

1. Working towards the eradication of poverty
2. Promote access to quality education
3. Fighting against hunger
4. Provide access to safe water and sanitation
5. Promote access to health
6. Encourage the use of renewable energies
7. Promote gender equality
8. Develop partnerships to achieve these objectives.

Presently, the CDO is staffed by a new full-time director, two CDO assistants and a financial controller.

The concluding document of GC XXI of the Holy Spirit which was held at Bagomoyo in Tanzania between 3-24 October 2021 devoted one of its five sections under the broad theme of ‘Spiritans Mission Today’ to development.²⁰ It also incorporated two related sections on ‘Finances for Contemporary Mission’ and ‘Ethics in Finances’. Anchored in a missionary approach to development and section 13.1 of SRL, the emphasis was on the principles of mission as service and liberation as well as dialogue and inculturation in partnership with others. It was also agreed that the Spiritans are committed to the UN sustainable development goals. The complementary and interactional roles of the Central Development Office, the Local Development Offices, and Development Support Offices were central to the thinking of the General Assembly. An emphasis was also placed on self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Of note was the distinction made between two specific categories in the Spiritan commitment to development. They include “donor-funded development projects, which aim to improve the conditions and living standards of local people in a country or region and self-sufficiency projects, which also aim to generate long-term income for a circumscription to carry out its mission.”²¹

An emphasis was also placed on self-reliance and self-sufficiency.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICES (LDOS)

There are now thirteen Local Development Offices in the following circumscriptions: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon-Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria -NE, PANO (Guinea-Bissau, Guinea-Conakry, Mauritania, & Senegal), Tanzania

20. Congregation of the Holy Spirit. *Bagomoyo 2021-XXI General Chapter*. Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Rome, 2021, 16-29.

21. The Central Development Office. Rome: Congregation of the Holy Spirit, 2020, 2.

The purpose of Kibanda is to promote the integral and sustainable development of disadvantaged peoples, especially in developing countries through supporting developmental programs managed by Spiritan missionaries.

and Uganda. In Asia and South America where few LDO's exist, it might be a sensible initial step to appoint a development coordinator to cover several countries. The functions of coordinators of the LDO's include conducting needs assessment and feasibility studies, the formulation of project proposals, oversight of project implementation, compliance with interim and completion reporting requirements and oversight of project financial obligations. Local project coordinators are also involved in contributing to circumscription level strategic plans, annual work plans, and review studies. They also closely interact with DSOs in formulating projects and in securing funding. The LDO relationship with the CDO is also critically important. As highlighted in the Spiritan Development Charter, the ultimate objective of this model is for LDOs to have the capacity and authority to plan, propose, access donor funding, implement, monitor, and furnish interim and completion reports according to best practice with the support of the CDO. For this to be realized, skills orientated training is of the essence and so, this approach will mitigate against any over-centralization of skills and technical expertise.

DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT OFFICES (DSOS)

The five Development Support Offices are:

The European Spiritan Centre for Cooperation and Development Cooperation (Kibanda) is a legally constituted non-profit organization created in 1997 by the Superiors of the ten member countries which form the Union of Circumscriptions of Europe (UCE). It officially became a nonprofit organization under Belgium law on May 24, 2001. The purpose of Kibanda is to promote the integral and sustainable development of disadvantaged peoples, especially in developing countries through supporting developmental programs managed by Spiritan missionaries. It seeks to participate in the defense of human rights to build peace and the reconstruction of social and material structures in countries affected by conflicts or natural disasters. It also contributes to European awareness raising for a healthy North/South cooperation that can lead to a real development of the most disadvantaged populations and to the reduction of social and economic inequalities at national, regional, and international levels. It principally delivers its mission by providing a brokerage and intermediation service between Southern hemisphere project applicants and Northern hemisphere donor organizations. It offers technical support and an advisory service to applicants at the various stages of the project life cycle. It

also generates project support income from individual donors primarily through its bi-monthly newsletter. The UCE Provincials cover its running costs and so all income directly generated is allocated to development projects. The Kibanda Manager is assisted by a Board of Directors and a part-time financial administrator who works on a voluntary basis.

Priority should be given to the poorer circumscriptions or groups and to projects which envisage the economic self-sufficiency of circumscriptions.

The European Spiritan Solidarity Account (CESS) was created in 2002 to provide a centralized, equitable and dedicated solidarity fund. It is managed by Kibanda and is fully funded by voluntary contributions from the ten European circumscriptions that constitute its membership. It supports the life, living conditions, survival and self-reliance needs of Spiritans in Southern hemisphere territories. Over the years, partner agencies such as Aid to the Church in Need in Germany have also contributed significant funding for Spiritan specific projects. Applications are processed by a representative Board while the founding Charter highlighted two purposes. The first emerged from a desire for the Provinces of Europe to express their co-responsibility for the life and growth of younger circumscriptions. The second revolved around putting in place a more centralized, equitable, and fairer channel to replace the traditional bi-lateral assistance approach. It was also determined that priority should be given to the poorer circumscriptions or groups and to projects which envisage the economic self-sufficiency of circumscriptions as well as assisting in the costs associated with the administration of a group. CESS now reserves 10% of its annual operational budget for natural disasters and other emergencies. The Director is assisted by a Board of Directors and a part-time volunteer financial administrator.

The Spiritan Office for Mission Advancement (SOMA) was established in 2012 and is the resource organization for animating and implementing the evangelical priorities of the USA Province. Located in Houston, Texas, it responds to the long-standing charism of the Congregation of serving the poorest and most abandoned peoples. That response is in the form of grants applied for by Spiritans in situ who identify specific needs. In doing so, SOMA works through their superiors and developmental coordinators to prioritize mission works in the local communities where they serve. SOMA also plays the leading role of managing the public relations for the US Province and communicates its mission works through internal and external communication channels including social media. The full-time Director is assisted by a Board of Directors and three part-time volunteers who fulfill the roles

of Chief Development Officer, Grants Manager, and Accountant. From 2012 to 2018, a Spiritan served as director, and from 2019, a lay associate has occupied that role.

SOLSEF's purpose is to promote the ideals of fraternity and solidarity among peoples, especially young people in Portuguese speaking countries who are most in need

Sol Sem Fronteiras (SOLSEF) was founded in 1993, as a registered non-governmental development organization in the national Register of Youth Associations in Portugal. Its purpose is to promote the ideals of fraternity and solidarity among peoples, especially young people in Portuguese speaking countries who are most in need. Since its foundation, it has implemented fifty-three projects across its nine target countries involving 100,700 client beneficiaries while 57% of its beneficiaries are women. SOLSEF actively promotes social justice and human rights and works in a spirit of co-responsibility and sustainability across its four principal activities which include international cooperation, education for citizenship, inclusion, and training. Most of its projects focus on educational and healthcare programs for children and young people as these are two key sustainable development goals. Guided by its organization *Principles and Statutes*, it produces and publishes an annual activity plan and budget on its website. SOLSEF receives its annual funding through a combination of methods including income it receives from individual and company donations as well as consignment taxes from the Portuguese government designated for the support of social society organizations. The balance is secured from the sale of arts and crafts merchandise, crowd funding campaigns, newsletter donations, membership fees and events.

The Irish Overseas Development Office (IODO) was created in 2010 as an initiative of the Irish Province and a registered charity in Ireland. The IODO does not engage in general fund-raising but avails itself of institutional funding from partner organizations while Misesan Cara is its most significant donor. It is a coalition of Irish based missionary bodies whose members work in 50 countries worldwide while its mission is to resource and enable development work with the excluded and most vulnerable. It does so by promoting a missionary approach to development through prioritizing personal witness, a holistic approach, a prophetic vision, crossing boundaries, and long-term commitment. It has recently published a new Misesan Cara Strategy 2022-2026.²² This strategy gives emphasis to

22. Misesan Cara. (2022). Misesan Cara Strategy 2022-2026. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/search?client=avast-a-1&q=misesan+cara+strategy+2022-2026&og=misesan+cara+strategy>.

Consistent with UN sustainable development goals, the strategy lists five priorities including: Climate Resiliency, Quality Education, Better Health, Clean Water and Sanitation, Human Rights, and Emergency Relief and Support.

an increased focus on projects which address climate change, capacity enhancement in organizational and professional development, and adaptability, efficiency, and effectiveness in relation to risk management and compliance. Consistent with UN sustainable development goals, the strategy lists five priorities including: Climate Resiliency, Quality Education, Better Health, Clean Water and Sanitation, Human Rights, and Emergency Relief and Support. Its work is made possible by generous financial support from by Irish Aid under the developmental budget of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Staffed by a full-time lay professional, the IODO funds Spiritan projects in overseas countries with an historical or current connection with the Irish Province. These include Angola, Brazil, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, Southern Sudan, and Tanzania.

OVERVIEW OF SOLIDARITY FUNDS DISTRIBUTED 2020-2022

In the period of 2020, 2021, and 2022, the Cor Unum Solidarity Fund which is managed by the Generalate in Rome distributed €577,766 for apostolic and emergency projects as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Apostolic Projects and Emergency Fund Distributions 2020-2022

| Year | Apostolic Projects | Emergency Fund | Totals |
|------|--------------------|----------------|----------|
| 2020 | €110,150 | €89,664 | €199,814 |
| 2021 | €119,168 | €69,416 | €188,584 |
| 2022 | €114,939 | €74,429 | €189,368 |

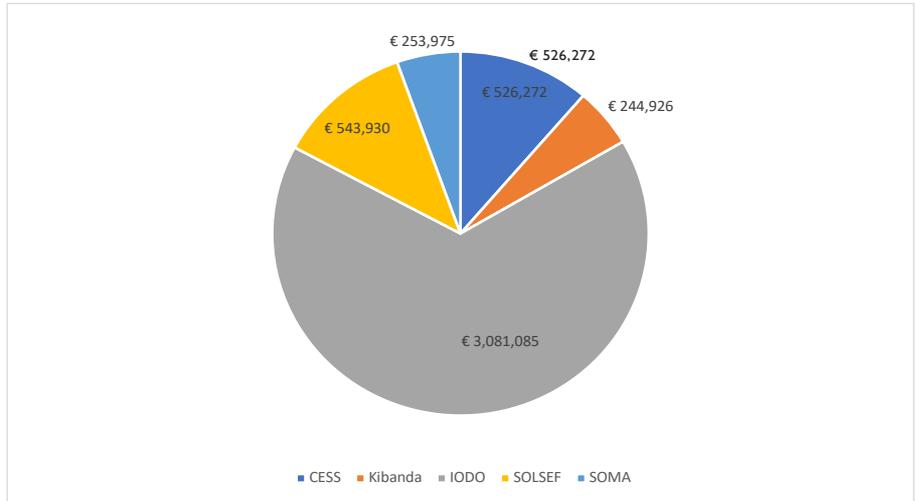
It also remitted €3,015,467 for formation projects globally in the same period as shown in Table 2. Taken together, these represent significant financial support for critical projects on an ongoing basis.

Table 2. Cor Unum Fund Distributions 2020-2022

| Year | Amount Distributed |
|------|--------------------|
| 2020 | €895,661 |
| 2021 | €1,101,077 |
| 2022 | €1,018,729 |

Figure 3 gives a breakdown of the grants made by the five Development Support Offices in the period 2000-2022. During this time-frame, a total of €4,650,173 was distributed over 252 projects. IODO provided 66% of the awarded grants, SOLSEF 12%, CESS 11%, while both KIBANDA and SOMA each contributed 5%.

Figure 3: DSO Grants Awarded 2020-2022

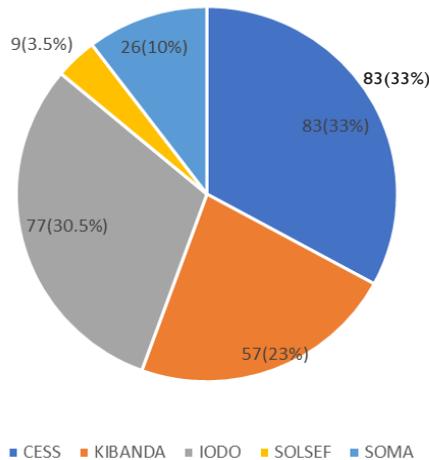


CESS and Kibanda supported 56% of the projects processed but their average grant over the three years was typically under €5,000.

A breakdown of the number and percentage of projects supported by each DSO in the years 2020-2022 is shown in Figure 4. Taken together, CESS and Kibanda supported 56% of the projects processed but their average grant over the three years was typically under €5,000.

The average SOMA grant was nearly double this amount while funding less projects (10%). SOLSEF funded the fewest projects (3.5%) but with higher levels of support. The IODO processed 30.5% of the projects received and contributed the largest amount in grants from the DSO's totaling €3,081,085.

Figure 4: Number and Percentage of Projects Assisted by DSO's 2020-2022 (N=252)



The critical observation is that the post-COVID 19 collections in the British, Irish and US circumscriptions were down when compared to 2019 collections.

Three English speaking Provinces (British, Irish, and USA) actively participate in an annual mission awareness program. These programs are organized in collaboration with the national associations for missionaries and the respective national Episcopal Conferences. They offer participating missionary Congregations and lay missionary Associations an invaluable ongoing opportunity to engage with parishioners in a face-to-face manner. In doing so, they share their missionary stories, reinforce the common missionary mandate of all baptized persons, and invite attendees to financially support the overseas missionary works of the presenting Congregation. The Irish program was initially known as the Coordinated Parish Promotions Program (CPPP) but has recently been retitled as the Missionary Awareness Program (MAP). In Britain, the program is called the ‘Mission Appeals Scheme’ (MAS) while in the USA, it is referred to as the ‘Missionary Cooperation Plan’ (MCP).

Table 3 presents the pre and post COVID-19 financial data in euro for comparative purposes. While the grand total collected was €952,364, the critical observation is that the post-COVID 19 collections in the British, Irish and US circumscriptions were down when compared to 2019 collections. Due to the stricter lockdowns in Ireland and the UK, it was not possible to conduct any mission appeals during 2020 and 2021 while it was possible to do so in the USA for 2021. An exact pre (2019) and post COVID-19 (2022) comparison was not possible as financial data from the US Province for 2022 remained incomplete at the time of writing. Instead, the collections received by the US Province for 2021 were used for this purpose.

**Table 3: Pre and Post COVID-19
Mission Appeals Collections in British, Irish & US Provinces**

| | Pre-COVID Collections 2019 | Post-COVID Collections 2022 | TOTALS |
|------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------|
| British Province | €116,278 | €97,127 | €213,405 |
| Irish Province | €269,361 | €118,074 | €387,435 |
| US Province | €209,535 | €141,989 (2021 Data) | €351,524 |
| TOTALS | €595,174 | €357,190 | €952,364 |

Taken together, the solidarity delivered through the Cor Unum Fund, the Development Support Offices, and the Mission Appeals programs remains substantial with a combined total of €8,561,064 over the past three years. This does not include other financial support received by our confreres outside the above-mentioned channels.

THINKING INTO THE FUTURE: SOME PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION

The past few years have spotlighted the need for resilience in the face of an extraordinary pandemic, the emergence of enhanced geopolitical tensions and worrying uncertainty around massive global costs that will be endured to tackle escalating climate changes. So, how can Spiritans respond?

Our historical legacy as missionaries imbued with a strong sense of solidarity and humanitarian spirit can continue to inspire new generations of Spiritans.

Our historical legacy as missionaries imbued with a strong sense of solidarity and humanitarian spirit can continue to inspire new generations of Spiritans to embrace a future with difficult challenges. The most important action that can be taken revolves around enhancing the training of seminarians with the developmental skills required for the future. A combination of workshops, internships, and formal training will be required. More specialists in the field of development and allied professions will be required for a heightened preparedness to professionally respond to the evolving needs of impoverished communities. The traditional disciplines of philosophy and theology are no longer enough.

There needs to be more emphasis placed on well formulated and commercially viable projects which can significantly enhance the self-reliance and sufficiency of our least developed circumscriptions. This is the primary strategy to remedy a dangerous over-dependency on continuous overseas grants from Europe and North America, especially at this time of elevated competition for declining resources. In the case of developmental projects consistent with the UN Global goals for a more sustainable world, larger scale projects across multiple circumscriptions should be considered in consultation with the CDO. This would enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of programs by streamlining multiple applications into a single larger application which would allow for a more systematic approach for technical data collection pertaining to impacts, outcomes, and results. A classic example would be water and sanitation projects.

A more consistent marketing of the Spiritan brand is necessary for funding agencies, digital campaigns, and engaging with the public. The proliferation of logos is counterproductive. A good beginning

*“The future
belongs to
those who
give the next
generation
reason for
hope.”*

might be to study the consistent branding of airline companies. Their logos typically remain constant while their motto may only occasionally change.

The final observation is that training on interim and completion reports for project applicants needs to be greatly improved. Again, this has implications for the precision of training modules that the CDO needs to organize as a matter of urgency.

Most importantly, these practical proposals listed above should not detract from the energy, enthusiasm, commitment, and social media acumen that our younger confreres exude. Rather, it might be best for all of us to relish the words of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who reminded us that “the future belongs to those who give the next generation reason for hope!”

*Michael Begley CSSp,
Dublin, Ireland.*