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# Vincentian University Partnerships for Urban Poverty Reduction

BY

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Vincentian universities can play an important role in ongoing global efforts to alleviate poverty and eliminate extreme poverty. This article suggests how the partnership between DePaul University and Adamson University reflects the values of Academic Social Responsibility and serves as a concrete response to the complex challenges of poverty reduction worldwide. In harmony with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, which promote global partnerships to halve poverty by 2015 and end extreme poverty by 2025, the authors argue that academic and intersectoral partnership is an essential responsibility and strategy for tackling the multifaceted crisis of global poverty.

## Vincentian Mission and Urban Poverty

DePaul University in Chicago and Adamson University in Manila share a Catholic Vincentian mission in higher education, which translates into the provision of affordable quality education with a special concern for the “deprived members of society”<sup>1</sup> and the “socially disadvantaged.”<sup>2</sup> What does the “urban” dimension mean in an increasingly globalized society? How can an “urban” university contribute solutions to the growing challenges of urban poverty in our cities and in the world? Like other Vincentian universities and colleges, DePaul and Adamson recognize that the fulfillment of their institutional values requires a commitment to public service, service learning, social justice, social transformation, and to the education of socially responsible leaders.<sup>3</sup> On the occasion of the Daniel H. Burnham centenni-

<sup>1</sup> DePaul University Mission Statement, adopted by the Board of Trustees, November 1991, available at: <http://mission.depaul.edu/mission/index.asp> (accessed December 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Adamson University Vision Statement, available at: [www.adamson.edu.ph/aboutus.shtml](http://www.adamson.edu.ph/aboutus.shtml) (accessed December 2007).

<sup>3</sup> From DePaul University’s website, About DePaul, available at: [www.depaul.edu/about](http://www.depaul.edu/about);

al celebrations for his Plan of Chicago and the Plan of Manila, the DePaul-Adamson partnership is a reminder that academic institutions could make a difference in alleviating urban poverty through international, academic, and community-based partnerships.<sup>4</sup>

Urban and rural poverties and development are intrinsically linked. This was clearly understood by Saint Vincent de Paul, who first founded the Congregation of the Mission in 1625 to provide spiritual assistance to “neglected, abandoned rural poor” in the lands of the Gondis.<sup>5</sup> In 1633, with the acquisition of the prior of Saint-Lazare just outside the walls of Paris, Vincent saw the possibility to respond effectively and sustainably to the growing needs of the urban poor through the foundation of the Daughters of Charity with Louise de Marillac.<sup>6</sup> Vincent realized that the voluntarism of the Confraternities of Charities was very important, but not enough to address the real needs of the urban poor. Dedicated individuals, working in partnership with other congregations and managed by a capable and sustainable administration, emerged as Vincent’s visionary leadership for poverty reduction.

Today, the challenges in urban poverty are no less demanding. Urban poverty is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon, and it is also an unacceptable human condition. According to the United Nations Population Fund, 2008 is the year in which “the world reaches an invisible but momentous milestone: For the first time in history, more than half its human population, 3.3 billion people, will be living in urban areas.”<sup>7</sup> As the trends of urban population growth continue, it is expected that by 2030 the number of people living in cities will swell to almost 5 billion. Many of the new urbanites will be poor. This is particularly visible in Asian and African cities, where the urban population will double between 2000 and 2030. That is, the accumulated urban growth of these two regions during the whole span of history will now double within a single generation. By 2030, the towns and cities of the devel-

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and from Adamson University’s mission statement available at [www.adamson.edu.ph/aboutus.shtml](http://www.adamson.edu.ph/aboutus.shtml) (accessed December 2007).

<sup>4</sup> To know more about the fundamental importance of partnerships for poverty reduction see Chanya L. Charles, Stephanie McNulty, and John A. Pennell, *Partnering for Results: A User’s Guide to Intersectoral Partnering*, Prepared for the U.S. Agency for International Development Mission Directors’ Conference (1998), at <http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/isp/handbook/PN-ACD-344.pdf>. See also Teresa S. Encarnación Tadem, “Transforming the State into a Partner in Cooperative Development: An Evaluation of NGO-Government Partnership in the Philippines,” in *Public-Private Partnerships: Theory and Practice in International Perspective*, ed. Stepehn P. Osborne (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 187-200.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Pujo, *Vincent de Paul: The Trailblazer* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 85.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>7</sup> UNFPA, *State of the World Population 2007: Unleashing the Potential for Urban Growth*, at: <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/> (accessed December 2007).

oping world will compose 81 percent of urban humanity.<sup>8</sup>

According to the United Nations Slum Dwellers Taskforce, one in six people living in urban areas worldwide is already a slum dweller — and that number will double in the next thirty years.<sup>9</sup> Unless global policy and action changes course, 1.5 billion urban residents worldwide will become slum dwellers by the year 2020. Most of these individuals will live in developing regions and lack a political voice, decent housing, sanitation, access to water, schools, health care, and a safe and dependable way of getting to work.

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established by the United Nations at the 2000 Millennium Summit range from halving extreme poverty by 2015 to developing global intersectoral partnerships for development. The MDGs serve as a blueprint for poverty reduction<sup>10</sup> and they have galvanized unprecedented efforts among academic institutions, public administrations, businesses, and civil society organizations to meet the needs of the world's poorest. Academic institutions are contributing to this effort in a variety of ways: teaching about the MDGs in the classroom, promoting research for sustainable development, participating in the end-of-poverty and other millennium campaigns, and joining the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC).<sup>11</sup> The partnership between DePaul and Adamson is a concrete contribution to the realization of the MDGs, particularly through its focus on addressing the needs of slum dwellers in metro Manila with concrete, sustainable, and policy-oriented solutions.

### **Vincentian University Partnerships for Poverty Reduction**

On 24 April 2007, DePaul, St. John's University, and Niagara University collaborated with Adamson on a symposium for Vincentian poverty reduction. Reflections and actions in relation to poverty had long been a constant

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> U.N. Millennium Project, *Taskforce: Improving the Lives of Slums Dwellers* (2005). Full text at: <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/Slumdwellers-complete.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> The MDGs include eight goals, eighteen targets and forty-eight indicators. The goals are: Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education; Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women; Goal 4: Reduce child mortality; Goal 5: Improve maternal health; Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability; Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development. In a single package, the MDGs synthesize many of the most important commitments made separately at the international conferences and summits of the 1990s and recognize explicitly the interdependence between growth, poverty reduction, and sustainable development. See [www.un.org/millenniumgoals/](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/) and [www.undp.org/mdg/](http://www.undp.org/mdg/).

<sup>11</sup> Drawing on its ten years of relations with the United Nations, DePaul is currently the only Vincentian higher education institution that is part of the United Nations Global Compact Academic Network, see [www.unglobalcompact.org/ParticipantsAndStakeholders/academic\\_participation.html](http://www.unglobalcompact.org/ParticipantsAndStakeholders/academic_participation.html) (accessed December 2007).

in the academic traditions of these Vincentian institutions, but this was the first time that concerned faculty and administrators drafted a plan for sharing best practices and reflecting on the role of academic institutions in reducing poverty. Reverend Norberto Carcellar, C.M., a Vincentian priest who founded the Vincentian Missionaries Social Development Foundation Inc. (VMSDFI) and promoted the formation of popular organizations (POs) under the organizational umbrella known as the Homeless People's Federation of the Philippines (HPFP), opened the symposium by sharing his personal and professional experience working with people in one of the most dehumanizing poverty conditions in the Philippines: the scavengers of Payatas, metro Manila.



The deplorable living conditions of Payatas, metro Manila.

*Courtesy of Marco Tavanti, Ph.D.*

Why should Vincentian academic institutions care about poor people in Manila? Three reasons emerged clearly from the video conversations between DePaul, Niagara, and St. John's universities: (1) The Vincentian values on which these institutions are founded compel them to take responsibility for reducing poverty worldwide; (2) Manila is home to the third largest Vincentian institution, Adamson University, which asked its sister American institutions for assistance in improving its service learning and partnerships with community organizations; and (3) Payatas is one of the sites in metro Manila where the work of the Congregation of the Mission in reducing

poverty has been recognized as best practice by the Commission on Systemic Change, headed by Reverend Robert Maloney, C.M., and more recently by the awarding of the prestigious Opus Prize to Father Carcellar, representing the HPFP in its work with micro-savings and urban slums upgrading.<sup>12</sup>

The partnerships that have emerged from these conversations aim to increase the organizational capacity of local POs among slum dwellers in Payatas, Sucat, and the relocation sites of Bocaue, Cabuyao, and Marilao. The latter three communities began as informal settlements along the north and south railroad systems of metro Manila. Members of these communities survived on income from established livelihoods such as motorcycle taxi driving and tailoring, yet day-to-day living conditions were precarious. These slum dwellers were displaced from their settlements to make way for the rehabilitation of the train systems of northern and southern Luzon.<sup>13</sup> The North Rail Relocation program alone transferred some 38,206 families to new living sites.

Under the leadership of Reverend Afiliano “Nonong” Fajardo, C.M., director of the Integrated Community Extension Services (ICES) at Adamson, administrators, faculty, and students committed to pilot a university-wide partnership with SouthVille 1, one of the relocation sites in Cabuyao, Laguna. After a training session on Vincentian leadership and poverty reduction given by DePaul’s faculty in the summer of 2007, Adamson founded the Vincentian Center for Social Responsibility (VCSR) to promote new livelihood programs for the empowerment of squatter citizens. The VCSR is spearheading an ambitious plan to engage academia through targeted projects in community

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<sup>12</sup> The product of a partnership among the Catholic University of America, the University of Notre Dame, Marquette University, and the University of San Francisco, the Opus Prize is a one million dollar faith-based humanitarian award and two \$100,000 awards given annually to recognize unsung heroes working on the frontlines of today’s most persistent social problems. The final recipient of the top prize is also a member of the Vincentian Family. Brother Constant Goetschalckx, F.C., founder and director of the AHADI International Institute, Tanzania, leads this organization with a Swahili name that means “working toward the fulfillment of a promise.” AHADI educates refugees from the war-torn countries of Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi by providing post-secondary training via a distance-learning program and instruction for 26,000 students per year studying for their high school diplomas. See [www.opusprize.org](http://www.opusprize.org).

<sup>13</sup> The Rail Linkage Project, envisioned to be a key development project for the central and southern Luzon region of the Philippines, aims to modernize the existing lines of the Philippine National Railways and provide efficient means of transportation to and from metro Manila and the provinces of northern and southern Luzon. The government under President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo identified the National Housing Authority as the lead agency for supervising and coordinating the relocation and resettlement of informal occupants. The project included the provision of housing sites for informal dwellers under a lending program. Nevertheless the relocation is causing enormous difficulties in resettlement, financial sustainability, and social cohesion in the new regions on the outskirts of metro Manila. See [www.nha.gov.ph/pages/rail.php](http://www.nha.gov.ph/pages/rail.php) (accessed December 2007).

partnership, service learning, value-leadership development, and participatory action research for poverty reduction and sustainable development. During the December 2007 study abroad program of DePaul's graduate students from the School of Public Service, Adamson launched the *Piso Mula Sa Puso* (Peso from the Heart), a support fund for the new livelihood program of the relocation site of Cabuyao.

Community leaders know that a key strategy for improving their livelihood is micro-savings that involves the entire community, and that perhaps can be matched by the cooperation of Adamson.<sup>14</sup> DePaul has been invited to participate in this initiative through a "Dollar from the Heart" matching program, to sustain these initiatives until these communities achieve their own economic sustainability. The initial objective of the partnership is to increase the leadership and organizational capacity of the POs in these sites through trainings in participatory poverty assessments, empowerment assessments, and appreciative inquiry. This partnership can potentially produce best practices that can be extended to other schools and universities and be further institutionalized. The key organizations involved in this partnership include DePaul, Adamson, the Homeless People Federation of the Philippines, the Payatas Popular Organizations, and the Vincentian Center for Social Responsibility.

*DePaul University, Chicago:*

In connection with its strategic plan Vision Twenty12, DePaul has formed a task force of faculty and administrators concerned with local and global poverty reduction. Related to these efforts, the DePaul Institute for Business and Professional Ethics refocused its mission on creating business partnerships for poverty reduction. DePaul's service-learning collaboration with Adamson began in 2004 after Reverend Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., then recently elected president of DePaul, visited Adamson and the Payatas organizations in Manila. Reverend Father Gregg L. Bañaga, Jr., C.M., president of Adamson, asked Father Holtschneider for assistance in Adamson's ongoing effort to build the academic relevance and community effectiveness of its service learning initiatives headed by the Integrated Community

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<sup>14</sup> Community leaders in the relocation sites and informal settlement know that micro-savings, not microfinance, is the solution to escaping the vicious circles of poverty. Although microfinance in the model of the Grameen Bank or Kiva is essential in poverty reduction, it may not be the best solution in extreme poverty conditions where financial support needs to go hand-in-hand with social development. Micro-savings, as it involves the active participation and sacrifice of individuals in the communities, presents the most effective strategy for empowering slum dwellers. See Norberto Carcellar, "Meet the Philippines Homeless People Federation: Vincentian Missionaries Social Development Foundation Incorporated (VMSDFI)," *Environment & Urbanization* 13:2 (October 2001).

Extension Service. Dr. Laurie Worrall, representing DePaul's Steans Center for Community Based Service Learning, and Dr. Marilyn Fleckenstein, representing Niagara University's Learn and Serve Niagara program, offered their assistance and expertise in service learning and community engagement. The Steans Center at DePaul has developed numerous best practices related to the integration of academic and educational purposes with service to community needs. More recently, in collaboration with the Study Abroad Office and the International Program Office, the Steans Center has projected its expertise into intercultural and international contexts. Dr. Marco Tavanti, Wicklander Faculty Fellow and research director of the DePaul Hay Leadership Project, continued and expanded the partnership by including graduate students from DePaul's School of Public Service. The graduate students applied their knowledge of needs assessment and organizational development to create a collaborative interchange with faculty and administrators at Adamson and with community leaders from the POs of the selected sites.

*Adamson University, Manila:*

Adamson is the third largest Vincentian institution of higher education, after DePaul in Chicago and St. John's in New York. These universities, along with Niagara in New York, All Hallows College in Dublin, and Santa Isabel University in Naga City, share similar missions and values to make a difference in society, particularly for people living in poverty. Under the leadership and vision of its president, Father Bañaga, Adamson has focused on international partnerships, academic collaborations, and community outreach. In recent years it has also invested in the connection between "leadership education" and "community service." This connection, highlighted by community partnerships and community-engaged teaching and research, emerged clearly during Adamson's Grand Academic Conference, "Harnessing Advances in Science and Technology for Poverty Reduction," on 30-31 August 2007, on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the university's foundation.<sup>15</sup>

*Homeless People's Federation of the Philippines:*

Formally established in 1998, the HPFP originated from the work on poverty reduction of the VMSDFI, which since 1992 has implemented some of the best practices in poverty alleviation among scavengers and those living in extreme marginalization in the Payatas area of metro Manila. Today the HPFP convenes poor community organizations from across the Philippines,

<sup>15</sup> Adamson University, Grand Academic Conference: "Harnessing Advances in Science and Technology for Poverty Reduction," held at the Waterfront Manila Pavilion Hotel, 30-31 August 2007.



seeking to find solutions to the lack of access to secure land, infrastructure, housing, health, welfare, income, and affordable credit. The HPFP is a member of Slum/Shack Dwellers International, an international people's organization comprised of urban poor and homeless groups from eleven countries; The HPFP organization, which has approximately 50,000 members,<sup>16</sup> represents a fundamental connection in this intersectoral partnership as it facilitates effective dialogue between grassroots organizations (e.g., POs of Payatas) and intergovernmental organizations (e.g., agencies and programs of the United Nations). Father Carcellar and several other Vincentians have been serving in this organization providing assistance with planning, fundraising, and developing international networks. Their international networks with sister organizations in slum areas of other metropolises in Kenya, Brazil, India, and South Africa, among others, represent a potential for future international partnerships in other countries.



The Payatas Dumpsite in Quezon City, metro Manila.  
*Courtesy of Marco Tavanti, Ph.D.*

#### *Payatas People's Organizations:*

The Payatas Dumpsite in Quezon City is the main destination for solid waste collected in metro Manila. Payatas' forerunner, Smokey Mountain, was notorious for the inhumane work conditions of the scavengers, many

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<sup>16</sup> United Nations Human Settlement Program (U.N. Habitat), *Analytical Perspective of Pro-Poor Slum Upgrading Frameworks* (2006).

of them children. Payatas' reputation worsened when a "trash slide" occurred in the year 2000 and many scavengers were buried under the waste; it too is known mostly for the deplorable working conditions of the scavengers.<sup>17</sup> The work of the Vincentians has been instrumental for transforming these infernal landscapes into some of the best practices in poverty reduction through self-help groups and POs. Most members of the Payatas POs are scavengers who earn their living collecting recyclable materials on the dump site.<sup>18</sup> They are among Manila's lowest-income residents, but not the worst off. The recycling they perform allows them to provide for their families. Several POs emerged from the implementation of micro-savings programs and community loans. The Lupang Pangako Urban Poor Association is the oldest popular association with a relationship to the HPFP and the VMSDFI. The POs in Payatas sustain social and community cohesion and activism for self-help groups, grassroots networks, and public policy initiatives that improve the quality of life for slum dwellers. Activities focus on women's and children's issues (maternal and infant care, child worker rehabilitation, and people with disabilities), health and well-being (elderly care, community health care, social health insurance), self-help promotion (microfinance, waste pickers development, land and shelter), and post-relocation expansion in sites outside of the garbage dump site. Reverend Aldrin Suan, C.M., a Vincentian pastor of Payatas, believes, along with various leaders of Payatas POs, that change is primarily a community-based effort and that the real results of today's work will be visible in the next generation. When visitors come to Payatas, they learn from the practical and effective experience of those living in poverty. They also learn that, before attempting to "do something for the poor," it would be best to ask them how and to actively involve them in the process, as no one else knows their conditions, people, and potential as they do.<sup>19</sup>

*Vincentian Center for Social Responsibility:*

Directed by Father Fajardo,<sup>20</sup> the VCSR emerged from Adamson's

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<sup>17</sup> For an overview of Payatas and the so-called "magic mountain" economic activities of the dumpsite, read Matthew Power, "The Magic Mountain: Trickle Down Economics in Philippines Garbage Dump," *Harper's Magazine*, December 2006, at: <http://www.harpers.org/archive/2006/12/0081312>. Although very illustrative, the article omits the "good" side of Payatas represented by the Popular Organizations.

<sup>18</sup> Carcellar, "Meet the Philippines Homeless."

<sup>19</sup> Based on a conversation between Dr. Marco Tavanti and Father Norberto Carcellar, Rome, 28 February 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Father Nonong is also the director of Adamson University's Integrated Community Extension Services (ICES) and coordinator of the Manila Archdiocese Housing Ministry. His leadership, vision, and position are instrumental for engaging the Adamson university academic

preexisting ICES program, which coordinates the university's community-based outreach, service learning, and enacts the university's commitment to help alleviate poverty in depressed areas of metro Manila. The VCSR also catalyzed the commitment that emerged from Dr. Tavanti's training program in Vincentian Leadership and Poverty Reduction at Adamson (1-10 August 2007) and the Adamson Grand Academic Conference "Harnessing the Advances of Science and Technology for Poverty Reduction" (30-31 August 2007). The VCSR represents a significant upgrade in university/community relations. Symbolically called ICES Version 9.27 (the feast day of Saint Vincent de Paul), the upgrade includes the following transitions:

- from the ICES process to the involvement of the entire university community (institutional commitment)
- from program-centered to community-initiated planning (community participatory approach)
- from a requirement-led to a community-sustainable interface (with an emphasis not just on learning but on impact)
- from a university-focused engagement to a citywide and national issue-based engagement (policy orientation and government partnership)
- from an academic and research-based interface to an NGO, PO, and community organization interface (focus on Community Organization Participatory Action Research, or COPAR)
- from exposure to knowledge formation through effective, professional, and result-based experiences.<sup>21</sup>

The VCSR proved instrumental in preparing the community profiles that emerged from an intense training of Adamson and volunteers for community-based poverty and needs assessments. The instrument used in the survey is the household profile questionnaire, also known as the Community-Based Monitoring System.<sup>22</sup> This instrument is often used to influence policy

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community not only at the neighborhood level (barangay) in outreach activities, but more directly in the ideas of urban poverty reduction and nation building.

<sup>21</sup> Adapted from the *Vincentian Center for Social Responsibility – The Official Newsletter of Integrated Community Extension Services*, Vol. 1 (June-August 2007).

<sup>22</sup> The CBMS is currently being implemented in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Pakistan, Philippines, Nepal, Vietnam, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Benin, Ghana, India, Laos, and Indonesia. "In general, the assessment aims to provide the national and local governments with up-to-date information for policymaking and program implementation. The CBMS work involves the design, pilot-test and implementation of a methodology for data collection and data processing, validation and utilization of CBMS data for needs identification as well as for the design and monitoring of program interventions at all geopolitical levels." Celia Reyes, "Overview

through needs assessments and impact analysis of poverty reduction strategies papers, and it links to the ongoing monitoring of the MDGs at the national level.<sup>23</sup> The partnership of Vincentian universities with community organizations recognizes the fundamental Vincentian value that poor people can forge their own change and influence policy.<sup>24</sup> The participatory methods of these poverty reduction initiatives acknowledge how POs, even in the midst of extreme poverty, also possess valuable resources that these partnerships can advance. This is not a new concept in poverty reduction and development studies. The World Bank, along with development NGOs and field researchers, has learned the importance and effectiveness of listening to “the voice of the poor.”<sup>25</sup> Although the level of participation may be interpreted at different levels, the Vincentian values behind these partnerships serve to enhance the level of engagement from community consultation and representation to community empowerment and organizational capacity development.<sup>26</sup>

In preparation for its second stage of collaboration with DePaul in December 2007, the VCSR capitalized on its trusted relations with community leaders and trained both community and Adamson volunteers for targeted needs assessments in five preselected sites. Under the direction of Dr. Tavanti, the participating graduate students of DePaul’s School of Public Service offered technical assistance on applied research methods and tools to be used by Adamson and community leaders involved in the partnership.

The community profiles developed for the informal settlements of Payatas and Sucat and the relocation sites of Bocaue, Cabuyao, and Marilao generated important data on income distribution, occupation of employed heads of households, skills of employable household members, and training needs.<sup>27</sup> Even in its initial stages, the data suggests that the depth of urban

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of the Community Based Monitoring System, Micro Impact of Micro Economics and Adjustment Policies Programme,” (2005).

<sup>23</sup> On the importance of linking MDGs to PRSPs for poverty reduction see <http://go.worldbank.org/5UYR73KD30>.

<sup>24</sup> See Caroline M. Robb, *Can the Poor Influence Policy? Participatory Poverty Assessments in the Developing World* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> At the turn of the new millennium, the World Bank collected the voices of more than sixty thousand poor women and men from sixty countries in an unprecedented effort to understand poverty from the perspective of the poor themselves. *Voices of the Poor*, as this participatory research initiative is called, chronicles the struggles and aspirations of poor people striving for a life of dignity. The World Bank Voice of the Poor Project, at: <http://go.worldbank.org/H1N8746X10> (accessed December 2007).

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Human Settlement Program (U.N. Habitat), 14; see also Deepa Narayan, *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Sourcebook: Draft* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2002). Available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/empowerment/index.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> Data forms a plan for policy actions managed by the National Housing Authority (NHA).

poverty in slum areas and relocation sites has been underestimated.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, the VCSR's appreciative inquiry approach and value-centered leadership development assessments suggest that the potentials and internal strategies for urban poverty reduction have also been underestimated. Based on these initial assessments, the VCSR has developed a plan to deliver training and certificate programs to residents of the relocation site of Cabuyao. The VCSR's partnership with DePaul, which could possibly extend to other Vincentian universities, could help in increasing international support for technical, financial, and leadership development.

### Academic Social Responsibility

During the inauguration of the VCSR on 28 September 2007, Philippine Vice President Noli De Castro congratulated Adamson and the Vincentian community for their leadership and efforts in the creation of the center as an instrument for engaging academia more directly in community building:

The Center is a great idea whose time has come. It is high time that we introduce to students a concept of brotherhood that is not based on exclusivity. It is high time that we include action and community involvement in the concept of higher learning... Education is about molding better people and contributing to building a better world.<sup>29</sup>

The analysis of academic practices in the promotion of socially responsible leaders, programs, and initiatives suggests the concept of academic social responsibility (ASR), which is becoming more central among academic institutions and university-based initiatives concerned with reducing poverty.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> At this stage it is premature to draw analysis and conclusions. Nevertheless, initial observations confirm what literature on urban poverty reduction and squatters upgrading suggests in terms of underestimation of aggregated statistics for urban population's access to basic services (education, health, transportation, etc.), the presence of allowances in certain urban areas (Makati City), and the lack of job opportunities in relocation sites. It also shows that urban poverty is much more than lack of economic support (often addressed through microcredit, job creation and entrepreneurship). The VCSR study illustrates that extreme urban poverty reduction also needs to address discrimination, leadership development and values formation. See Diana Mitlin and David Satterthwaite, eds., *Empowering Squatter Citizen: Local Government, Civil Society and Urban Poverty Reduction* (Earthscan, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> Vice President and Housing and Urban Development Coordinator (HUDCC) chairman Noli 'Kabayan' De Castro, "V.P. Noli Cites Vincentian Community for Nation Building," *V.P. News*, Sunday, 30 September 2007, at: <http://famvin.org/en/archive/philippine-vp-cites-vincentian-community-for-bation-building>.

<sup>30</sup> A recent example comes from the "Universidad Costruye Pais" Project in Chile, where fourteen Chilean universities created a partnership for making social responsibility the essential

The essential characteristic of socially responsible universities is their commitment to prioritize ethical principles in four ways: by providing valuable, affordable and accessible education; by encouraging socially engaged teaching, scholarship, and service; by signaling institutional commitment; and by fostering academic and intersectoral partnerships.

### I. Providing Value-accessible Education

Education is one of the most important contributions to poverty reduction. Quality, accessible, ethically grounded education equips people with the skills and networks to lift themselves out of poverty. In the current global economy a university degree greatly enhances one's employability and resiliency. Administrators of Vincentian higher education institutions recognize this first key function of academic social responsibility as a central element in poverty reduction and a fulfillment of their Vincentian and Catholic mission. Father Holtschneider, and Reverend Edward R. Udovic, C.M., introduce it at the beginning of their document on the Vincentian Higher Education Apostolate in the United States:

In an audience held on 29 January 2001, Pope John Paul II observed, "education is a central element of the Church's 'Option for the Poor.'" The Eastern (Philadelphia) and Midwestern (Saint Louis) provinces of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States (the Vincentians) believe this wholeheartedly, and have made a significant investment in this apostolate for almost 200 years. Today, in the United States, a college degree is the single most effective way to lift a person out of poverty.<sup>31</sup>

Although not necessarily founded with the intent to directly educate the poor, today Vincentian universities investing in mission and service-oriented programs, in the words of Father Udovic, "effectively address the contemporary challenges facing our brothers and sisters who are poor."<sup>32</sup>

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principle driving their personal, social, and institutional actions toward reducing poverty and social exclusion in Latin America. See Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI), "The Socially Responsible University: A Way of Being," 14 November 2007, at: <http://www.guni-rmies.net/news/detail.php?id=1135> (accessed December 2007).

<sup>31</sup> Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., and Edward R. Udovic, C.M., *The Vincentian Higher Education Apostolate in the United States* (DePaul University: Office of the Senior Executive for University Mission, 2003), available at: [http://mission.depaul.edu/\\_downloads/VincentianHigherEd.pdf](http://mission.depaul.edu/_downloads/VincentianHigherEd.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> Edward R. Udovic, C.M., "Translating Vincent de Paul for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Case Study of Vincentian Mission Effectiveness Efforts at DePaul University," *Vincentian Heritage* 23-25:2, 26:1 (2005): 291.

## II. Encouraging Social Engagement

Social engagement through service learning, action research, and community-based partnerships helps university students, faculty, staff, and administrators shed the “ivory tower” paradigm and turn universities toward the service of societal needs. Through community-engaged teaching, applied research, and social service opportunities, Vincentian universities develop socially responsible students, faculty, staff, and administrators.<sup>33</sup> However, just preparing and approving academic programs according to the mission of the university may not guarantee the education of socially responsible leaders or foster programs that benefit disadvantaged populations.

Perhaps public service, social engagement, and poverty reduction should be considered more prominently in decisions concerning curricula approval, support for research, hiring, tenure, and promotions.<sup>34</sup> DePaul promotes socially engaged programs through specific grants such as the Vincentian Endowment Fund (VEF)<sup>35</sup> and service learning programs such as the Irvin W. Steans Center for Community Based Service Learning & Community Service Studies (CBSL).<sup>36</sup> These programs encourage students, faculty, and staff to discover creative means of teaching and research, and to organize events and

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<sup>33</sup> *The William and Mary Pat Gannon Hay – Vincent de Paul Leadership Project* at DePaul University has been collecting various examples of engaged leadership practices across Vincentian universities, see <http://leadership.depaul.edu>. Marco Tavanti, “Engaged Vincentian Leadership: The Values and Competencies that Inspire Leaders to Serve in the Footsteps of St. Vincent de Paul,” *Journal for College & Character* 8:1 (November 2006).

<sup>34</sup> Bill Gates’ remarks at the Harvard University commencement on 7 June 2007 suggest a similar recommendation. “Let me make a request of the deans and the professors — the intellectual leaders here at Harvard: As you hire new faculty, award tenure, review curriculum, and determine degree requirements, please ask yourselves: Should our best minds be dedicated to solving our biggest problems? Should Harvard encourage its faculty to take on the world’s worst inequities? Should Harvard students learn about the depth of global poverty... the prevalence of world hunger... the scarcity of clean water... the girls kept out of school... the children who die from diseases we can cure? Should the world’s most privileged people learn about the lives of the world’s least privileged? These are not rhetorical questions — you will answer with your policies.” Bill Gates, Harvard University Commencement Address, 2007.

<sup>35</sup> The Vincentian Endowment Fund seeks to assist the university in developing its understanding of how, as an institution of higher education informed by the vision of Vincent de Paul, it is to be Catholic as it enters its second century. The VEF supports appropriate grant projects that directly enhance the identity of DePaul University as a Catholic, Vincentian, and urban university with special attention to the Catholic and Vincentian aspects of this identity. See <http://mission.depaul.edu/vef/>.

<sup>36</sup> The Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning provides DePaul students with educational opportunities grounded in Vincentian community values. The center seeks to develop mutually beneficial relationships with community organizations in order to develop a sense of social agency in our students through enrollment in its courses, community internships, and placements, as well as community-based student employment. At: <http://cbsl.depaul.edu/>.

service opportunities that address poverty reduction. University Ministry initiatives such as the DePaul Community Service Association (DCSA) and the Nogales, Chiapas, and El Salvador study abroad program offer many opportunities for students and faculty to witness poverty first-hand through trips into marginalized neighborhoods, poor areas, and developing countries.

Vincentian universities encourage their faculty to conduct research and teach on issues concerning local, national, and global poverty.<sup>37</sup> These activities could inspire further action if institutional funds, academic recognitions, and course requirements were oriented toward civil engagement, social responsibility, and poverty reduction. To make this happen, a new kind of university must evolve in which community/university engagement is the rule rather than the exception.<sup>38</sup> It requires an internal transformation of academia in which experiential and service learning, participatory action research, and local/international public services are more strongly recognized in faculty and student evaluations.

### III. Signaling Institutional Commitment

Vincentian academic institutions can better demonstrate their organization's mission and values by investing their resources in social responsibility and poverty reduction. In line with their educational mission, these institutions serve as examples to internal and external constituencies by making such investments. DePaul's Vision Twenty12 reflects this institutional commitment through a university-wide effort to provide accessible quality education preparing women and men to be ethically and socially engaged leaders for an increasingly globalized world.<sup>39</sup> Institutional strategic plans also orient the organizational mission toward concrete goals and trajectories through which whole institutions can be transformed. Vincentian universities offer considerable resources to local, national, and international agencies and community groups with complementary goals.<sup>40</sup> But sporadic or individual commitments of people and programs may not be enough to convey the values of social responsibility or to tackle the complexity of poverty. Institutional support may not be the only solution, but it is essential to

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<sup>37</sup> Holtschneider and Udovic, *Vincentian Higher Education Apostolate*.

<sup>38</sup> Stephen L. Percy, Nancy L. Zimpher, and Mary Jane Brukardt, *Creating a New Kind of University: Institutionalizing Community-University Engagement* (Bolton, Mass.: Anker Pub., 2006).

<sup>39</sup> DePaul University, "Vision Twenty12, the Plan for Academic Enrichment," builds on the foundation laid by Vision 2006, the Plan to Build Capacity. With those successes in mind, it charts a course of university-wide academic enrichment, buttressed by social and civic responsibility, Catholic and Vincentian values, and sound finances. See <http://president.depaul.edu/Vision2012/Plan.html> (accessed December 2007).

<sup>40</sup> Holtschneider and Udovic, *Vincentian Higher Education Apostolate*.



making a difference.<sup>41</sup>

Adamson demonstrates one example of institutional commitment through the establishment of its VCSR and the *Piso Mula Sa Pusong* (Peso from the Heart) initiative. Another example is DePaul's effort to make ethics and social responsibility the center of its curricula and teaching activities. Emerging from the Vision Twenty12 commitment, the Ethics Across the Curricula (EAC) initiative, spearheaded by Dr. Patricia H. Werhane, director of the DePaul Institute for Business and Professional Ethics, aims to promote a common ethical language inspired by the principles and values of Saint Vincent de Paul. To encourage dialogue based on the Catholic and Vincentian tradition and build a shared foundation for teaching ethics across colleges and disciplines at DePaul, the EAC-Ethics 101 Booklet was developed. This piece highlights the Four-S Principles of Vincentian Ethics: solidarity, synchronicity, subsidiarity, and sustainability.<sup>42</sup>

The first Vincentian ethical principle of solidarity suggests that Vincent's preferential option for the poor is both a humanistic and faith-based perspective. For Vincent, the poor are "our lords and masters" and "the place where we meet Christ and find salvation." In other words, the principle suggests that solidarity for poverty reduction is a must for Vincentian leaders. The second principle of synchronicity is inspired by the notion that Vincent knew organized charity would be ineffective unless diverse people, organizations, and institutions worked together.<sup>43</sup> The quality of service depends on the leader's vision and faith in divine providence and on his or her ability to engage people to cooperate. The third principle of subsidiarity summarizes Vincent's emphasis on the dignity of the human individual, which transpires from his personal dedication to the poor and his managerial style. Central leadership authority in organizations should perform only those

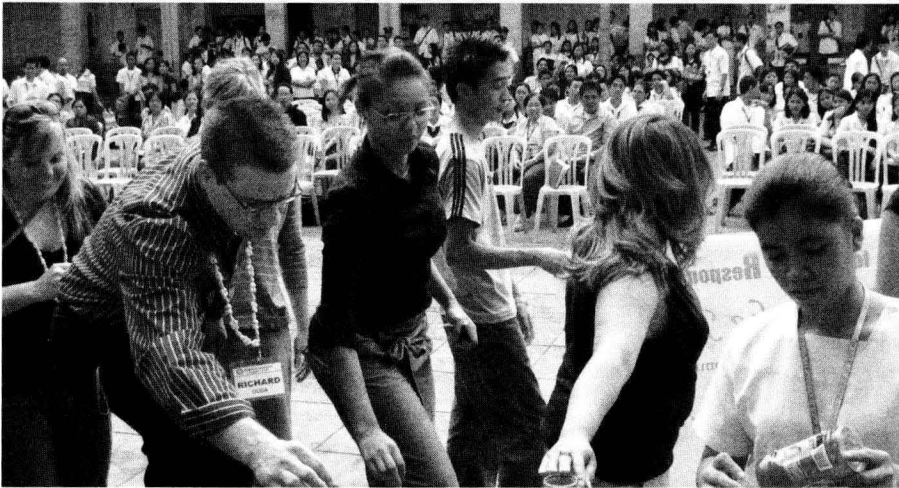
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<sup>41</sup> Numerous studies argue the central role of institutional support in poverty reduction. A well known argument is that of Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for our Time* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005). At the academic level, the concept of institutional support is symbolized as a "tiger," representing the agility and institutional strengths of DePaul, by Reverend Father Jack Minogue, C.M., former president of DePaul, in Victor Meyer Jr. and J. Patrick Murphy, C.M., *Dinosauros, Gazelas & Tigres: Novas Abordagens da Administração* (Editora Insular, 2000).

<sup>42</sup> Ethics across the Curricula-Ethics 101 Booklet — Ethics Common Language was developed by a subcommittee of the Ethics across the Curricula Committee in response to Vision Twenty12, Objective 1e. The booklet was the work of Patricia Werhane, Andrew Gold, Karyn Holm, Scott Paeth, Marco Tavanti, and David Wellman using a number of external sources as well.

<sup>43</sup> Bernard Pujo suggests that Vincent's initial idea of having men and women working together on the Confraternities of Charity was later abandoned to create independent but collaborating institutions for the sake of the mission. He also suggests that Vincent's ability to mobilize solidarity and engage people in the mission was largely due to his charm and ability to establish friendships. Pujo, *The Trailblazer*, 102, and 106.

tasks that cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level. Institutions are ethically called to create the social conditions necessary to the full development of the individual, such as the right to work, decent housing, health care, etc. This principle summarizes Vincent's conviction that organizations, including the Catholic Church, should be at the service of the human person.<sup>44</sup> The fourth principle of sustainability refers to Vincent's commitment not only to serving the poor directly, but also to creating and managing capable and sustained institutions to serve them. The sustainability of a project is therefore integral to Vincentian leadership ethics. Vincent's phrase, "It is not enough to do good, it must be done well" can be translated here as "It is not enough to develop servant leaders unless we also engage in the development of servant structures."<sup>45</sup>



Students and staff from both Adamson University in Manila and DePaul University in Chicago contribute toward the *Piso Mula Sa Puso — Peso from the Heart* — livelihood support fund for the community of Cabuyao, Philippines.

*Photo by Sandra Bykowski*

<sup>44</sup> In Catholic social teaching "subsidiarity" sometimes refers to decentralizing decision-making authority and responsibility to subsidiary groups whenever it serves the common good. In a more secular modern context it is associated with the concepts of participatory democracy and limited government. At DePaul the concept often referred to as "personalism" is a reflection of the subsidiary principle.

<sup>45</sup> Sustainability is a central concept in poverty reduction and organizational development. In business it is related to the concept of "triple bottom line," seeking a balanced approach to profit that would benefit financial, societal, and environmental sustainability. See John Elkington, *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business* (Gabriola Island, B.C.: New Society Publishers, 1998). See also the more recent book by Christopher Laszlo, *Sustainable Value: How the World's Leading Companies are Doing Well by Doing Good* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

#### IV. Fostering Academic and Intersectoral Partnerships

Universities can reduce poverty most powerfully through partnerships and dialogue.<sup>46</sup> Collaboration is fundamental to enhancing an institution's academic reputation, but developing and nurturing local, regional, national, and international links can also reduce poverty. Academic institutions that are committed to global citizenship, social responsibility and/or poverty reduction should pay particular attention to their selection of partners and scope of partnerships. This not only benefits the university but also has value for the partnering academic institutions, community organizations, stakeholders and other collaborators. The eradication of hunger and extreme poverty cannot be accomplished by a single institution, country, or sector. It requires forming coalitions and partnerships for the promotion of sustainable development and poverty reduction. Established academic institutions are particularly responsible for helping younger universities or educational organizations in developing countries and marginalized communities.

The UNGC has recognized the potential contributions that academic institutions can offer in this way.<sup>47</sup> The recently created Global Compact Academic Council, in which DePaul is a member among 150 other academic institutions worldwide, identifies academic partnerships with the UNGC on the following premises: (1) helping to educate leaders to promote business engagement and the advancement of human rights, labor rights, environmental rights, and the UNGC's anticorruption principles; and 2) alignment of the UNGC mission with academic institutions for education on social responsibility, multidisciplinary research for societal change, dissemination of corporate citizenship values, technical support for new solutions, and lending capacity for educational infrastructures and local networks.<sup>48</sup> In the same way that the UNGC seeks to promote responsible corporate citizenship so that business can be part of the solution to the challenges of globalization, the concept of academic social responsibility calls and enables academia to employ its privileged neutrality and broad network for the benefit of the

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<sup>46</sup> Marco Tavanti and Rosemary Hollinger, "Partnerships for Sustainable Development: Challenges and Opportunities of Inter-Sectoral Partnerships for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals," *International Society for Third-Sector Research, 7th International Working Papers* (2006). Available at: <http://www.istr.org/>.

<sup>47</sup> Read a recent interview between Dr. Manuel Escudero, head of the Global Compact Networks & Academic Initiatives U.N. Global Compact Office, and Dr. Angel Cabrera, senior adviser for Academic Affairs, U.N. Global Compact Office, president of Thunderbird, The Garvin School of Global Management, at: [http://www.businessweek.com/bschools/content/mar2007/bs20070329\\_381532.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/bschools/content/mar2007/bs20070329_381532.htm).

<sup>48</sup> George Kell, *A Dynamic Academic Network: Consultation with Global Compact Academic Partners* (New York: United Nations Global Compact, 29 March 2006).

world's most impoverished and at risk citizens.

Father Maloney, former superior general of the Congregation of the Mission and current chair of the International Think Tank on Poverty Eradication and Systemic Change, recognizes the important role of academia in serving the poor and fighting poverty. He reminds St. John's University and other Vincentian academic institutions that their central mission and institutional efforts should be directed toward: (1) creating a global worldview, recognizing poverty and its reduction at the local, national, and international levels; (2) using the university's resources in teaching, research, and institutional networking to promote analysis and action regarding the root causes of poverty; (3) promoting a university-wide effort to combine creativity, visions, and resources toward the eradication of poverty; and (4) fighting poverty by working for justice, "teaching spirituality of justice, a philosophy of justice, a law of justice, an economics of justice, a liberal education (a freedom) founded on justice."<sup>49</sup>

Universities are in a unique position to engage businesses, governments, and civil society in working together to alleviate poverty and effect positive social change. As impartial mediators and facilitators they can bring about partnerships for poverty reduction and the still-possible achievement of the MDGs by 2015. Academia occupies Alan Fowler's "fourth position" central to facilitating dialogue and collaboration for the common good.<sup>50</sup>

### **Partnerships for Poverty Reduction**

In September of 2000, world leaders met at the Millennium Summit held at the United Nations in New York and committed to achieving the eight MDGs by 2015. They embraced a vision for a world that is devoid of poverty, ensures gender equality, offers universal access to primary education, sustains environmental resources, provides treatment for fatal diseases that are prevalent among the world's poorest, and develops a global partnership for development.<sup>51</sup>

The 2005 World Summit, the largest ever gathering of world leaders, reiterated the significance of intersectoral partnerships between businesses, governmental organizations, and civil society organizations in addressing

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<sup>49</sup> Robert. P. Maloney, C.M., Inaugural Address to the Vincentian Center for Church and Society at St. John's University, Jamaica, New York, January 1995. Available at: <http://www.vincenter.org/95/maloney.html> (accessed December 2007).

<sup>50</sup> The concept of the "fourth position" has been applied by Alan Fowler in the study of the mediating role of NGOs in international development. Alan Fowler, "NGO Futures: Beyond Aid. NGDO Values and the Fourth Position," *Third World Quarterly* 21:4 (2000): 589-603.

<sup>51</sup> The Millennium Assembly of the United Nations — Millennium Summit (New York: United Nations, 6-8 September 2000), at: <http://www.un.org/millennium/>.

global inequities in wealth, health, and education.<sup>52</sup> In spite of the unprecedented opportunity, government leaders were unable to agree on a solution to reduce poverty worldwide.<sup>53</sup> On this mostly ideological battleground, those who suffer most are the poor.<sup>54</sup> We wonder what Vincent de Paul would do today to reduce poverty. Bernard Pujo provides insight in the story of Vincent's battle with France's royal power to defend his assets and assist the poor Saint-Lazare.<sup>55</sup> Contemplating further, we wonder whether Vincent would today join the international campaign to end poverty. Would he preach about the MDGs? What type of projects or institutions would he engage with for poverty alleviation? What kind of partnerships would he create between religious institutions and civic groups to foster nation building and sustainable development? Vincent valued his canon law education, but only in its virtue to aiding service of the poor. Today we find inspiration from university professors like C.K. Prahalad, Jeffrey Sachs, and Muhammad Yunus who have used their intellectual capacities to make a difference in the lives of many poor people.<sup>56</sup> They inspire us to engage businesses, governmental organizations, and NGOs in implementing innovative strategies for alleviating poverty worldwide.

Reducing poverty and sustaining development are among the most complex challenges of the twenty-first century. No single initiative, institution, or sector will be able to change the economic, social, political and moral implications of world poverty and inequality. The MDGs are a helpful blueprint, but they will remain unattainable dreams unless we implement effective intersectoral and community-based partnerships. The academic sector, beginning with those institutions whose mission is specifically connected to poverty reduction, sustainable development, or social responsibility, has the potential to make a major contribution to ongoing global and intersectoral efforts.

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<sup>52</sup> The High Level Plenary Meeting of the 60th Session of the General Assembly (New York: United Nations, 14-16 September 2005), at: <http://www.un.org/summit2005/>.

<sup>53</sup> The 2005 Summit process changed dramatically on 17 August with the submission by the United States of 750 alterations to a thirty-nine-page text of proposed reforms. Among the sought-for changes were a U.N. Secretariat with more decision-making capability and the removal of all fourteen references to the eight MDGs. Jonas Hagen, 2005 World Summit, at: <http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2005/issue3/0305p5.html>.

<sup>54</sup> Jeffrey Sachs, "Serving Up Soil For Dinner," *Financial Times*, 12 September 2005.

<sup>55</sup> "To protect the Congregation's assets, [Vincent] sometimes even had to do battle against the royal power. The king, who was always short of money, and now and then, he wanted to sell certain domains, dependencies of Saint-Lazare, over which the Crown believed it had rights." Pujo, *The Trailblazer*, 109.

<sup>56</sup> C.K. Prahalad, *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid: Eradicating Poverty Through Profits* (Wharton School Publishing, 2006); Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for our Time* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005); Muhammad Yunus and Alan Jolis, *Banker to the Poor Micro-Lending and the Battle Against World Poverty* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999).



Students and staff from Adamson and DePaul unite in support of the Piso Mula Sa Puso.

*Photo by Mar Bustamante, courtesy of the Institutional Development and External Affairs Office, Adamson University*

The educational development of socially responsible leaders can be achieved only in synchronicity with a commitment to academic social responsibility. The partnership between Adamson and DePaul demonstrates the potential for other Vincentian academic partnerships to benefit the urban poor and marginalized sectors of our global societies.

Urban poverty today is scarcely different from how Charles Dickens portrayed the socioeconomic conditions of pre-revolutionary France: It is the best of times, and the worst of times.<sup>57</sup> The informal settlements of Manila, like the marginalized neighborhoods of Chicago, exemplify the global urban landscape of extremes between poverty and exclusion on one side and wealth and power on the other. This landscape is not so different from the Paris that Vincent saw in the seventeenth century. Today we look at his example for inspiration to not only pay attention to the poor but also to persuade people of different classes and sectors to work together to alleviate poverty, and from his moral mandate to serve the poor by delivering them quality services for the construction of a better world.

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<sup>57</sup> Paraphrased from Charles Dickens, Hablot Knight Browne, and Frederick Barnard, *A Tale of Two Cities*, Great Illustrated Classics (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1942).