



**SPIRITAN  
INTERNATIONAL**  
Together, for an integral development

# Newsletter

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## In this issue:

Editorial <i>Kenneth Okoli</i> .....	1
Presentation of Fr. Brendan Carr <i>Brendan Carr</i> .....	3
Spiritan humanitarian response to flooding, Odomomoh, Nigeria <i>Sombu Thaddeus Terungwa</i> .....	4
Centre Esperance Mission Insertion, Gabon <i>Biyeghe Juvenal Kerensky</i> .....	6
Sustainability Project in Paraguay <i>Mariano Espinoza Sala</i> .....	8
Borana drought situation <i>Kilimpe Garbicha</i> .....	10

## Editorial

Our Central development office (CDO) is taking a new direction and building on the solid foundation established by the pioneer director. The aim of this new direction is to continue to serve and find better means of achieving the goals of our CDO in accordance with the recommendations of our General Chapter of Bagamoyo II.

Our new team includes a management team; the Director (Kenneth Okoli) based in Rome, assisted by two other Confreres (Philippe Engel and Brendan Carr) based in Switzerland and Ireland respectively. Philippe is not new to the project having been the pioneer Director. In this edition of our Newsletter, we introduce to you Brendan Carr who comes with a wealth of experience in development processes to support the team. In collaboration with the Director, Philippe will cover and support our work in the Francophone circumscriptions while Brendan will closely support our activities within the Lusophone circumscriptions.

The management team is supported by the Spiritan General Council and services departments in Rome and their collaborators based in their respective zones (Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone). We have an established steering committee to rely on as well as the vast network of our local development and support offices. Our new organogram published below gives details of how we intend to reach out to all our collaborators, members and benefactors.

Our hope in this new arrangement is to advance the culture of decentralization which clearly reflects the aspirations of our organization. This gives priority to local initiatives which encourages continuous improvement. Our communication is intended to be complete and respectful. We want to favour accountability and transparency in our decision making and in our relationships with our collaborators, members, benefactors and donor partners. We ultimately want to build trust and diversity in leadership.



Apart from the support we give to our various circumscriptions in the areas of formation, animation and coordination, the CDO has also in collaboration with the General Council been able to intervene and support during crisis situations in some of our circumscriptions. We have also reached out to support sustainable development projects in one of our circumscriptions while seeking for more means to support our missionaries and collaborators in difficult missions

In this edition of the Newsletter, we present to you some of those interventions that have taken place in Odomomoh, Northwest, Nigeria and in Paraguay. We are publishing good initiatives and support work being carried out by our members at Pongiontee, Gabon, in their orphanage Centre. Our attention is also drawn to the drought situation in Ethiopia.

Climate change as we know threatens to undermine progress in nearly every area of human development. It poses substantial risks to food production, water supplies, ecosystems, energy security, and infrastructure. It is predicted that by 2050 more than 140 million people may be forced to migrate within national borders in order to avoid its worst effects. This is becoming frequent and evident in many of our mission areas as shown in the report on flooding in Odomomoh, Nigeria and the devastating situation of drought in the Southern region of Ethiopia.

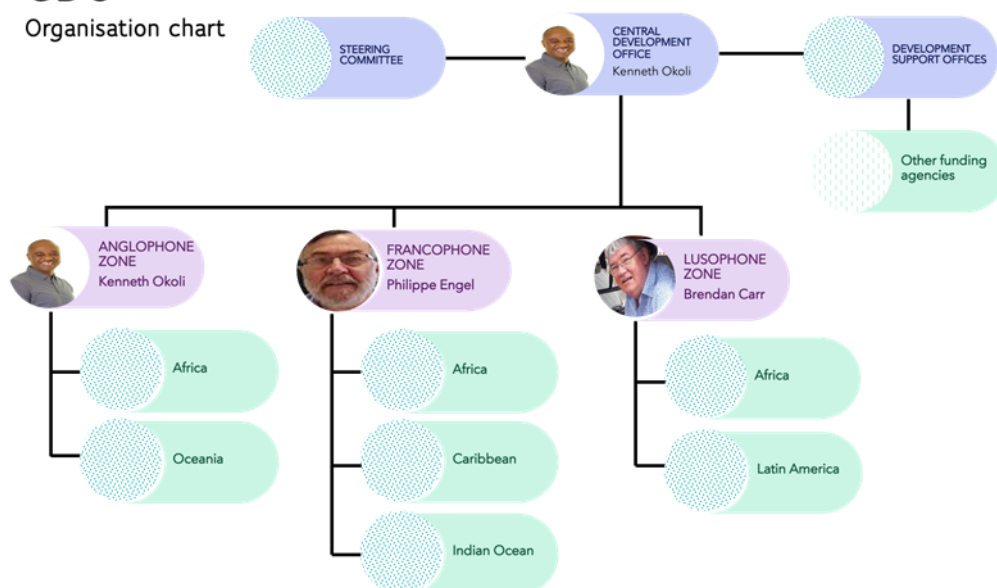
This year's World Youth Day in Lisbon is a good opportunity for all our young persons to continue to join their voices with the rest of the world on how to protect our 'mother earth' as advised by Pope Francis.

Thank you for all your support. We highly esteem you, our readers and collaborators, as our most valuable resource!

*Kenneth Okoli*

## CDO

### Organisation chart





Fr. Brendan Carr CSSp.

## Fr. Brendan Carr CSSp.

Brendan is a member of the Congregation in the Province of Ireland since the completion of his novitiate year of 1972/73. He took final commitment in 1981 and was ordained in 1982. From Northern Ireland, born in 1954, it was there he followed his primary and initiated his secondary education. He completed his secondary education at Rockwell College, a Spiritan School in Ireland. He came to Dublin to complete a university degree and his seminary training and did his PPE in Sierra Leone as a teacher from 1977 – 79. He then returned to Ireland for his theology studies and was ordained to ministry in 1982.

In 1983 he went to Angola in Southern Africa where he spent 17 years until 2000. Angola was torn apart with civil war during those years and Brendan says that is where he witnessed the great strength and impact of the dedicated missionary on the lives of people. The missionary occupies a privileged space between cultures, between tradition and development, between dominance and empowerment, and between dependence and self-reliance. The Good News of individual human dignity, respect for community, liberation through knowledge, inclusion by right, and faith based, are powerful tools to share with people struggling to make their lives and their children's better. This gave Brendan a personal interest in human development as integral to Christian mission.

The Spiritan Congregation has a global reach and capacity to model faith in action. It identifies missionaries and trusted aid-workers in the developing world who seek to improve the quality of life for communities through small, sustainable projects. Brendan finds it truly satisfying to experience so many positive outcomes in development through Spiritan work on the ground. He is currently the chair of the Spiritan Mission Ireland – Animation Commission (SMIAC) and brings valuable experience as a missionary to the Spiritan Central Development Office.





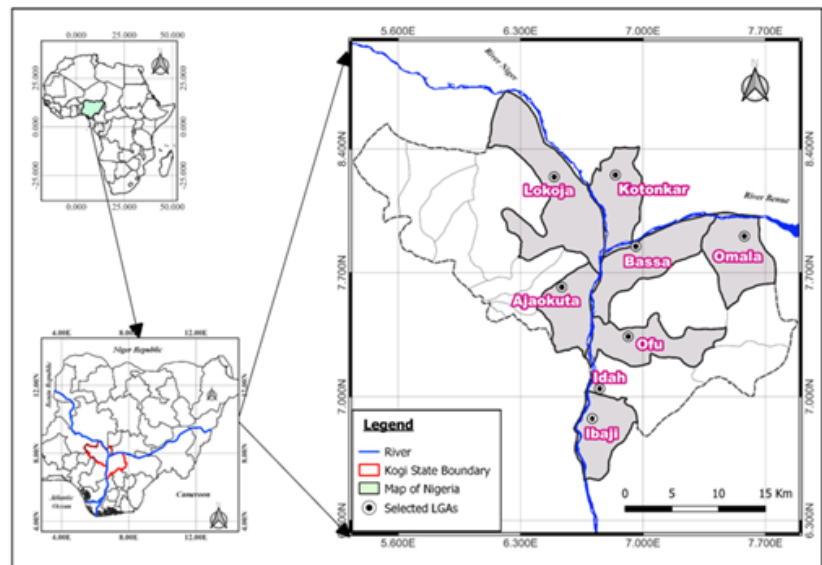


Fr. Sombu Thaddeus Terungwa CSSp

## Spiritan humanitarian response to flooding, Odomomoh, Nigeria

Spiritan presence in Odomomoh date back to the 1950's when the Canadian Spiritans started primary evangelization and witness to the people of the area. Until date, the Spiritans are still present in the area, they are seen as the defender, and advocate for the poor in their difficult times. According to the indigenous people of Odomomoh, "the Spiritans never abandon us, unlike other government agencies and NGO's who always flee our area during calamities..."

The floods in 2022 affected many parts of Nigeria. According to the Federal Government Data, the floods had displaced over 1.4 million people, over 603 people lost their lives, and more than 2,400 persons were injured. It also caused unprecedented and huge fatalities, landslides, massive displacement of people, immeasurable destruction of farms, houses, roads, property and sundry. While Nigeria typically experiences seasonal flooding, this flood was the worst in the country since the last ten years.



St. Theresa's Catholic Church Odomomoh is a Spiritan parish located at the extension of the bank of River Niger in Ibaji LGA of Kogi State. Every year, the villages within the area experience flood from the month of July to early November. The people are left to struggle and suffer this yearly calamity without government assistance and help.

The floods of 2022 brought huge devastation to the area and as a result, pastoral activities were crippled within the parish and its outstations. Most schools in the area were affected and many of the people were rendered homeless and helpless, a good number of them took refuge within the parish rectory.

Spiritans provided assistance to support the victims with relief materials / palliatives during the period of flooding providing them with food, basic needs and medications and supported the resettlement of 85 household (a household comprises an average of eight persons in Odomomoh and environs) when the flood receded.





### Testimonials from Beneficiaries of Spiritans interventions in Odomomoh

“The Spiritans have written their name in gold ink in our hearts, it can't be forgotten, it can't be erased. You came to us at the time we needed help most. If we did not receive the food items and other materials, the hunger added to the effects of flood would have killed us. We eat and we are alive today. “

**Mr Isaac Aye**

“Government did not remember us, she didn't see our sufferings, she didn't notice that we have no place to sleep, that water has taken away everything, we have no food. No body from the government came to visit us, not to mention of giving us food items and other materials. If not the shelter and palliatives materials you gave my family, life should had been unbearable for us. My family is grateful to you and the Holy Ghost Fathers. God bless you and the Spiritans.”

**Mr Ugbude Agum**

“I thought my family will not eat for at least a week or two because we lost everything, even the food we had finished. The palliatives and relief materials were God visit to us, they gave us a huge relief, we could not worry about what we were going to eat again, for us, it was a miracle that happened, we give God the glory and thank you and the Spiritans. “

**Sunday Egwuaba**

“I don't know where to begin, but God bless you. Look at me, I am an old man, my wife is old. The water destroyed our house, you gave us a place to stay. Now, you call us and gave us food items, Garri, rice, milk, oil, Maggi, salt, items too many for me to mention; as you do good us, God will do you good, you will never lack in Jesus name. Amen.”

**Mrs Briget Ajoggi**

“I am happy, we are happy, Odomomoh is happy, our children are happy. You saw our sufferings, you saw our tears, you clean up our sufferings and turn them into joy, you wipe away our tears. I will never forget you, we will never forget you, Odomomoh will never forget you and the Holy Ghost Fathers, God will never forget you all.”

**Paulina Aromeh**







Biyeghe Juvenal Kerensky CSSp

## Spiritans in Gabon reaching out to vulnerable children in an orphanage center (Centre Esperance Mission Insertion)

Spiritans Missionaries have a long and remarkable history among the excluded and vulnerable people, this dates back to their two founders Claude Poullart Des Places and Francis Mary Paul Liberman, who founded the congregation solely to take care of the needs of vulnerable people. In the footsteps of our founders, Spiritans are all over the continents supporting and looking for where established system is not able to offer essential humanitarian services.

Such was the calling and yearning in Gabon that motivated the Spiritans to establish the CEMI Centre (Centre Esperance Mission Insertion) to cater for the vulnerable children. CEMI is an orphanage founded and managed by Spiritans in Gabon as an NGO whose primary objectives were to shelter and cater for the many young boys on the street of the town who have no support. It is located in Port Gentile (second largest city of the country) on the outskirts of the town. Today 18 children are hosted in the house and many more not accommodated in the house come for various support services at the Centre.



Some of the children are not orphans *per se*, but their parents cannot take care of them, thereby abandoning them to their fate on the street. As part of their dedication to the vulnerable, the Spiritans in Port Gentile go out to the streets in search of such children to give them shelter and care for their needs. The Centre is well known and established that even the State Social services bring street children to the centre for support.



Apart from providing them with their various needs and giving them hope of humanity, the centre serves as a means of preventing them from becoming drug addicts, falling into delinquency and offers them a future. In the centre, the Spiritans welcome them, feed them, and educate them. A primary school was also built within the centre where the children can easily get their education without fear of being judged because of their age since they start school later than average children.

The children are not accommodated in this Centre for too long as the aim is to let the children go back into the



the society and get themselves reinserted and reunited with their families.

Located in a vast area of six hectares of land, CEMI has a house of welcome, a chapel, two warehouses (not completed) that will host a training school to teach children technical jobs (carpentry, electrician, welding etc.) and two sporting areas (almost the only ones in the city).

One of the big challenges of this project at the moment is that the site lacks protection. Some of our children coming back a bit late from studies or work have been molested. Drug dealers and delinquents are having easy access to our children, thereby undermining all our support to the children. As an open site it allows intruders access into the place at the expense of overall protection of our vulnerable children. In the past three years, efforts have been made to secure the Centre through building a wooden fence around the compound but this has not been realized. And even with wood fencing, it will not take time before a better fencing is sought after, hence, our passionate appeal to you our generous benefactors to help us build a brick wall around the compound. Our overseas volunteers and the Spiritan administration in Gabon are seriously hunting for funds to help realise this project for the safety of our children. Any donation from you will be highly appreciated!







Bro Mariano Espinoza Sala CSSp

## Sustainability Project in Paraguay.

Thank you very much for the important support received from the General Team through the development office that accompanies the progress of the different most vulnerable circumscriptions of the congregation around the world.

I would like to start by briefly presenting the life and a bit of history of the Espiritana circumscription of Paraguay. In 1967 the first Spiritans arrived in these Paraguayan lands from the Province of Trinidad and Tobago, it was a decision with the intention of expanding the Spiritan presence in South American lands that at that time there were only Spiritans in Brazil. After a few years of presence in the north, which was the poorest region of the country, there was a problem with the local Church and they had to leave the country, except for one of them who took refuge in a parish in the capital of the country with the permission of the archbishop of that time. It was in the 1970s. As the province of Trinidad could no longer take responsibility for the new mission in Paraguay, help was requested from the General House to send missionaries so that the mission in Paraguay could continue its course. The General House made a call to some European provinces, and they responded positively, missionaries from some European countries arrived: Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, France.....a very international group was thus created, at first with European members and later diversifying to North Americans and africans. This configuration of the Paraguayan group at that time left it very dependent from the beginning on the provinces from which the missionaries present in the group came. Financially it received support from those provinces and the real need to create some source of income locally was not felt. Likewise, the possibility of receiving local vocations did not open until the end of 1980. The internationality of the group continued forward, already in the year 2000 the first African brothers came, and some local vocations already professed also joined the group. The progress of local vocations was very slow in the history of the Paraguayan group, so much so that in 56 years of presence there are currently only 5 professed (3 perpetual and 2 temporary) members.

Currently there are 12 members of 10 different nationalities in the group. It is one of the most international circumscriptions of the congregation.







The internationality of the Circumscription is an enormous wealth; the group from Paraguay is a true expression of the contemporary face of Spiritan engagement – intercultural living with its many intricate baggage is only possible where the Spirit blows. Coupled with that, it also has its other challenges, one of which is the constant mobility within the group; some missionaries go, and others come, a constant movement. This reality creates vulnerability to the group. It is like a purely missionary space; pastoral care is the main concern.

On account of the vulnerable position the group currently finds itself in, its structural precariousness, its little or no local infrastructural endowment as a source of income, we considered it urgent to look for means to initiate some concrete and reliable forms of self-sustenance since external sources are getting less and less while the needs are increasing. This is the main concern of the leadership team of the group in recent years. In this drive for self-sustenance, we have received important support from the General Council to build income-generating infrastructures towards alleviating the basic and constant needs of our group. However, other needs are numerous: houses of formation (postulancy, novitiate), vacations for the brothers (tickets), administration, maintenance of movable infrastructures, health and the different contributions to the general administration etc.

As a source of income for us to support our mission and with support from Rome, we are building two commercial halls on the property attached to the novitiate that, once completed, can be rented for businesses and occasions that have a good social impact on the people. It is the first time the group have concretely pursued a specific form of self-sustenance project; it is a great step forward and a great achievement, which we hope will give us an important boost towards the future. It will encourage us to become more and more rooted in this Guarani land. This could be the roadmap that heralds a promising future, it may well be that Des Places and Libermann are inspiring us to broaden our horizons towards these Latin American lands where the church has a long history of prophetic and liberating presence. Pope Francis is a living expression of this Latin American church and its history. We are infinitely grateful for this concrete expression of solidarity from the CDO. It is the practice of the gospel within the Congregation. As Jesus reminds us, every time you do it for the most vulnerable of my brothers, you do it for me ... Mt. 25: 40

*Bro Mariano Espinoza Sala CSSp*





Fr. Kilimpe Garbicha CSSp

## Borana drought situation

I am Fr. Kilimpe Garbicha, a Spiritan missionary working in my home country Ethiopia. I am also the Superior of the Spiritan group in Ethiopia. Our congregation is currently working in the Southeast and Southwest of Ethiopia among the nomadic communities in the remote part of the country, at the border with Kenya. In the Southeast we work among the Borana pastorlist community, while in Southwest we work in Gamo Gofa and South Omo among the Hamar nomadic community. Originally, I come from the Borana pastoralist community who were terribly affected and continue to experience severe drought situation at moment. I would like to share with you, what is happening to the Borana community and to appeal to all people of goodwill to support our suffering communities who have lost all their animals due to prolonged drought in the area. Basically, this information I am sharing with you is from the zonal task force that keeps updating us every Thursday concerning the drought situation.

### Background

Borana Zone is one of the 21 Zones of Oromia regional state located in the Southern part of the region. Its administrative Centre is Yabello which is about 570km from the capital city of Addis Ababa. Total population of the zone is estimated to be 1.2 million with 91% people residing in rural settings. The Borana zone is one of the pastoral zones of the region characterized by erratic rainfalls leading to chronic food insecurity and poverty. The zone is recurrently affected by drought, conflict, and desert locust. The most dominant livelihood is pastoralism where over 85% of the total population depends on livestock production and productivity whereas the remaining 15% of the population depend on mixed farming system (agriculture and livestock rearing).



Among southern parts of Oromia region, Borana Zone is one of the pastoral zones of the region that is characterized by chronic food insecurity and critical water and pasture shortage (Drought update 2022). Access to water remains very low (below 33%) in most of the lowland and semi-lowland areas of the zone. Majority of drought affected communities are reliant on emergency relief assistances and livestock rearing as their main livelihood. The current drought since 2022 is resulting in a humanitarian catastrophe which needs timely actions to save lives and avert the current famine like situation.

### Impact of the drought

The sustained drought situation is worsening the local communities living condition and the lack of access to pasture and water has led to emaciated livestock body condition resulting in large number of livestock deaths across all woredas of the zone. Supply of livestock to the market has increased with alarming decrease in the price due to poor physical conditions resulting in negative terms of trade. The drought also disrupted the market situation in which supply of grains to the market significantly decreased with increase in price. The recurrent drought continues to worsen the humanitarian situations of the community in thirteen districts of the zone with limited access to basic needs and social services.

Livelihood of a large number of the population has been affected, with observed large number of droughts induced displacement and migration even abroad to Kenya. Considering this, immediate provision of an integrated emergency-lifesaving response to severely drought affected areas and mobilization of additional resources and humanitarians' partners to scale up responses is highly needed.







Data obtained from Borana Zone Women and Children affairs office indicate large concerns for drought affected children, increasing of child mobility, child exploitation, street children, child abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional/psychological abuse, Harm full traditional practice, increasing dropout of school, child trafficking, increasing of child separation from their families and being unaccompanied. The Education sector is one of the most affected sectors during this drought induced emergency. In pastoralist community, students are forced to migrate with their family, tasked to support the family in fetching water and finding pasture. Majority are also unable to continue their education due to food insecurity.

In addition, drought affected children have no access to food, water, shelter, and education health, safety, and security psychosocial support like providing first aid counseling (individual and group) in visited sites. There is a need of family tracing and reunification, psychological support, provide rehabilitative therapy as well as awareness creation session on children protection, establish child friendly spaces in various sites, promote and expand orphan Centre and integrated response for children out of school.

Drought induced food shortage is severe due to repeated failures of the rainy season which critically affected crop and livestock production. According to the recent post meher assessment report of the zone, 867,000 of the Borana community in all the 13 woredas need food assistance. Milk is the Livestock product which is the main nutritious food which protects children not to fall into malnutrition. During drought period, due to the critical shortage in milk production, many children are exposed to malnutrition. In Borana zone acute malnutrition cases and deaths are very alarming and continuously increasing across all woredas. In addition, from bordering zone and country, cholera disease outbreaks are also reported. Similarly, critical water shortage at health facilities also compromised community access to basic health services.

Across all woredas of the zone there is a new influx of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) because of severe drought impacts linked with failure of four (4) consecutive rainy seasons. Overall IDP related response remains very limited and inadequate compared to the existing needs. Displaced women, children and old persons are desperate for help due to lack of food, protection, healthcare, and shelter.





## Together for a more sustainable World Youth Day

The Holy Father has challenged us to build an event of youth, an event of strength. It is with this fresh and creative mind, as well as clearheaded and responsibility, that we look at WYD Lisbon 2023.

WYD Lisbon 2023 will be attended by Pope Francis' encyclicals *Laudato si'* e *Fratelli Tutti*, and by the apostolic exhortation *Christus Vivit*. They invite us to take great care of our Common Home. The Holy Father says "everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society. (LS, 91). WYD Lisbon 2023 will bare in its very core the concept of "integral ecology".

It is our mission to build the WYD Lisbon 2023 upon the sustainability goals adopted globally, the *Laudato si'* Goals put forward by the Vatican, as well as the United Nations 2030 Agenda (SDGs), following the *orientations of the Holy See*.

This commitment relies on our temperance regarding resource usage, as well as our goodwill and honesty towards giving our utmost best. Let WYD Lisbon 2023 challenge us, so that each and every one of us "leaves this gathering much better informed than when we arrived" (Pope Francis to all the Youth organising WYD Lisbon 2023, May 22). Inspired by these values and moved by the Holy Father's challenge that we live by the values of universal fraternity and care for our Common Home, together, we commit to: Making sustainability a central goal in WYD Lisbon 2023!

We wish that WYD Lisbon 2023 becomes a reference in the global commitment towards sustainability and that it leaves behind a positive and long-lasting legacy for the general community, the organizing comity, the partners, the volunteers, and the pilgrims.



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