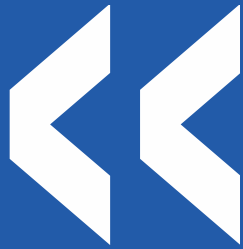


SOCIETE
DE SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL
CONSEIL GENERAL
INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL TRAINING
**POVERTY AND
SYSTEMIC
CHANGE**





The question which divides men in our time is no longer a question of political systems. It is a social question: that is, of knowing which will prevail: the spirit of selfishness or the spirit of sacrifice? Whether society is to be simply a great opportunity of exploitation for the benefit of the strongest or a dedication of everyone for the benefit of all

BLESSED FRÉDÉRIC OZANAM, 1836



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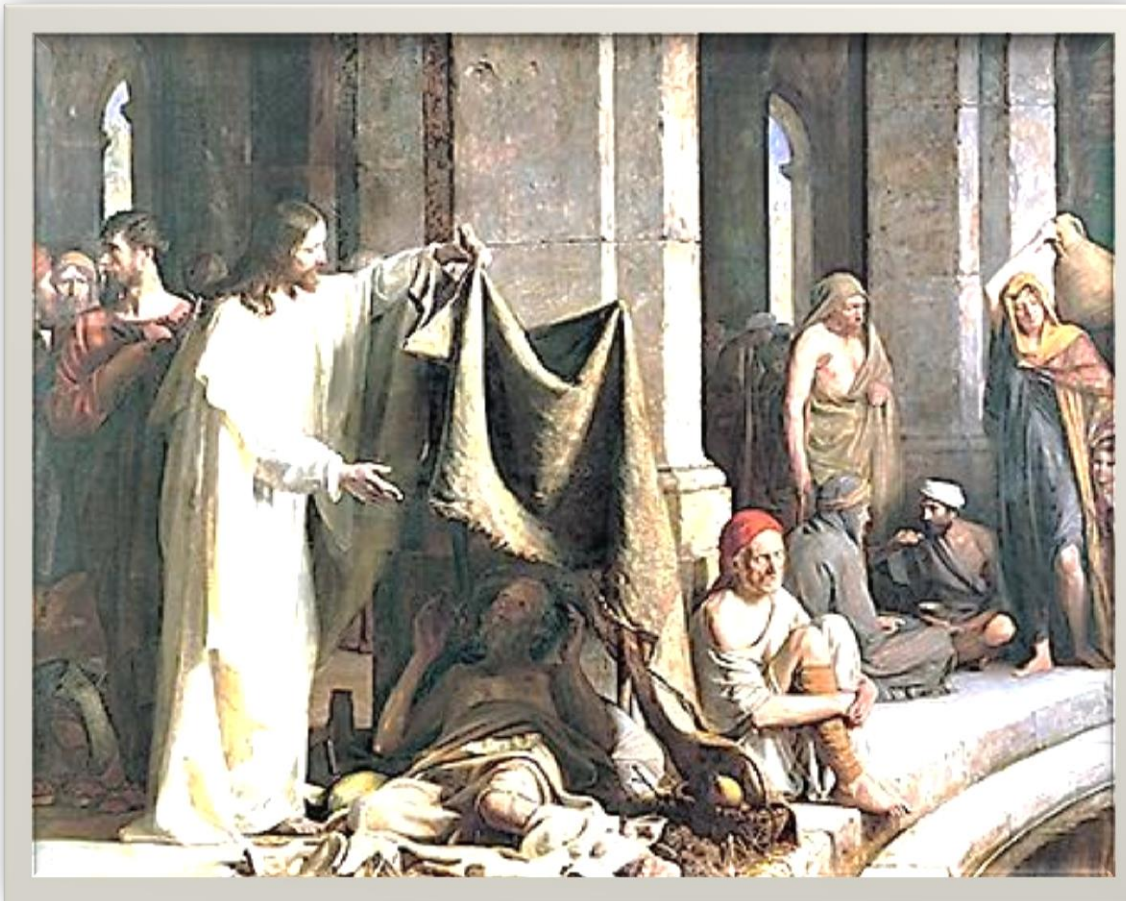
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AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA, JESUS MEETS EXTREME POVERTY

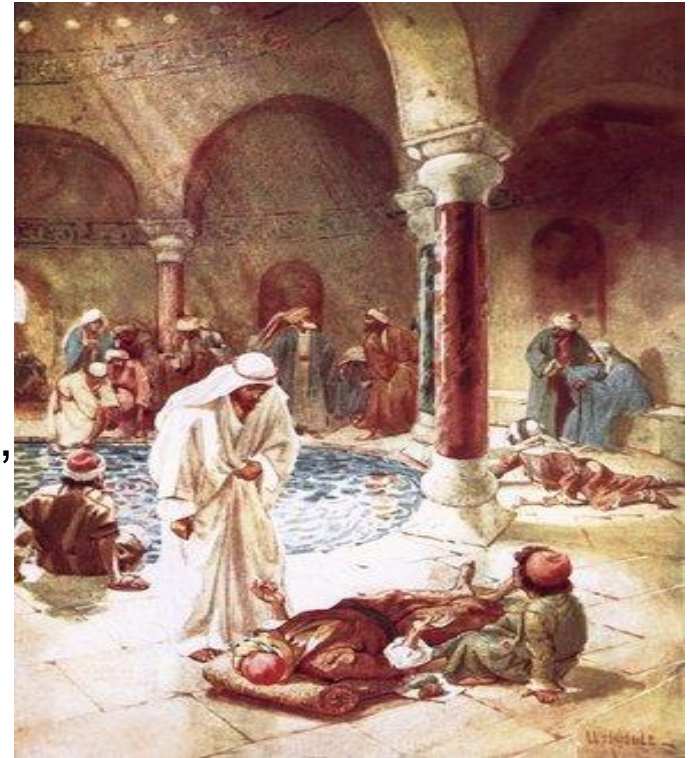


WAITING AND IMMOBILITY (John 5: 1-16)

At the pool of Bethesda, among the crowd of the sick, a disabled man had been waiting for a cure for 38 years

“There is no one to help me into the pool, and when the waters begin to stir, someone else always gets there before me”

Without Christ, the disabled man would have waited all his life. The system (being the first to bathe in order to be cured) excluded him from a cure



A FEW FIGURES

Today (figures for 2012)

- 900 million people live below the poverty threshold (1.90 \$ a day) out of the world's population of 7 billion people
- Access to the goods of this world is closed to them. They have to survive in less than human living conditions.
- There is no-one to lift them out.



ALL ARE POOR

While extreme poverty is scandalous, there are many other forms of poverty too, which isolate each person within their own system



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CHANGING SYSTEMS THAT LEAD TO POVERTY



IMAGE OF THE UNIVERSE

When a star explodes, everything in the universe feels the effects

Similarly, when elements that affect the life of a person are missing, this has repercussions everywhere

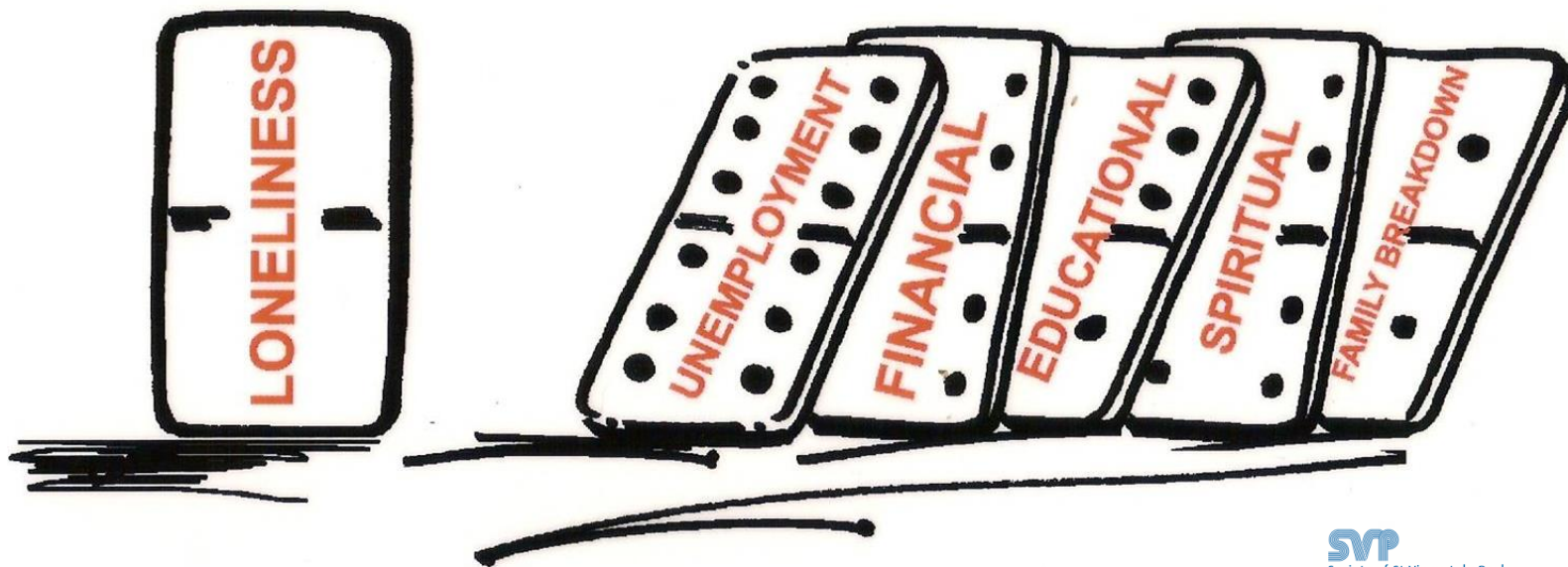
It may involve:

- Family
- Institutions
- Work
- Accommodation conditions
- Food
- Water



- Health
- Education
- Moral values
- Spiritual development

REPERCUSSIONS ILLUSTRATED BY “THE DOMINO EFFECT”



THE PRINCIPLES OF THE SYSTEMIC APPROACH

- 1. Totality principle:** The system cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts.
- 2. Interaction principle:** each element of the system may act on the others and on the whole.
- 3. Self-regulation:** the system always seeks to return to its previous stable state when it is modified (hence resistance to change).
- 4. Equifinality:** the same result can be achieved by different routes.



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IDENTIFY DYSFUNCTIONALITIES

Find information to help understand and explain the results for dysfunction or discontent.

To do this, look at recurrent interaction among the various components of the system

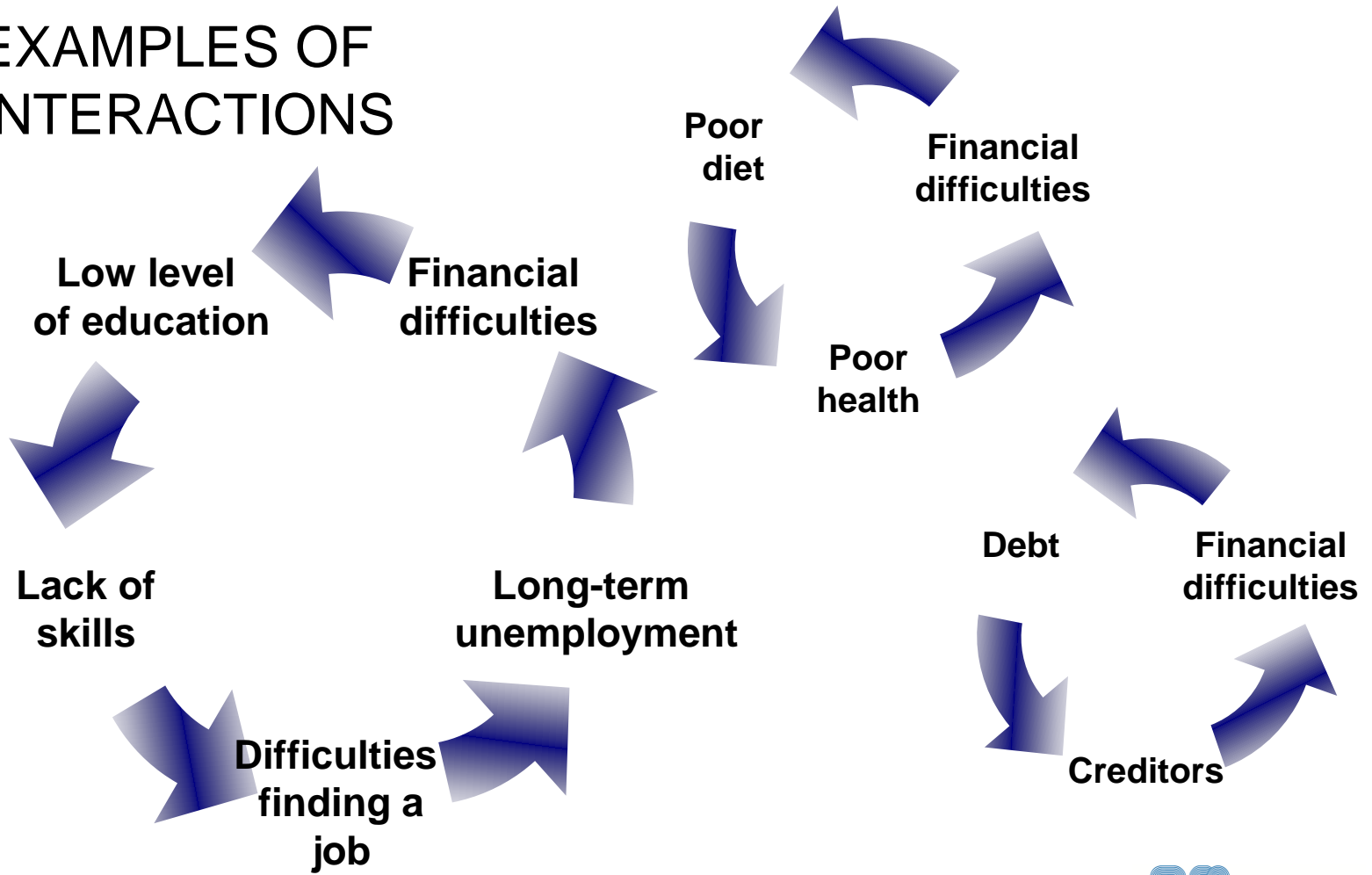
Move people forward by raising awareness, cooperation and consensus (gradual change)

Try to obtain their participation in their own change.

A process that takes time



EXAMPLES OF INTERACTIONS



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CRITERIA FOR DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN A TRADITIONAL PROJECT AND A SYSTEMIC PROJECT

1. **Participation** of those in need
2. **Long-term social impact**
3. **Durability**: projects must be self-sufficient
4. **Multiplier effect**: they must be reproducible
5. **Innovation**: replace traditional practices by current, innovative practices
6. **Partnership**: mobilising many people to achieve a common objective



In a systemic project, assistance must not be a form of charity that encourages dependency and weakness.

On the contrary, assistance must be a force for independence



“THE GREEN TREE PROJECT” IN SOUTH SUDAN

Funded by the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
(CIAD commission (projects) of the Council General)

Project launch date: 2012

Description: A population of 2197 refugees returning home were granted land, farming tools and seeds. These people were given proper training by professional farmers.

This project meets the requirements of a systemic project:

- ✓The people in need participate in their own development
- ✓The project has long-term social impact: it allows them to feed their families and meet the education and health costs for their children
- ✓It is self-sufficient
- ✓ It is innovative, because it has a positive impact on the environment in an area seriously affected by deforestation.



SYSTEMIC CHANGE IN THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY

In 2006, Fr Gregory Gay, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, formed a Commission to promote systemic change within the Vincentian Family.

Since then, the Vincentian Family has worked together towards this goal:

- Shared training
- Joint projects



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AN APPROACH THAT HAS TO BE SUPPLEMENTED

- There are, however, situations of poverty where systemic change does not apply.
- The human system is complex, the freedom of each person is involved. One change is therefore not systematic
- “Get up, take up your bed and walk”. At the pool of Bethesda, Christ enabled the lame man to move, giving him back his confidence
- Outside any system, the loving presence towards the person in need is always relevant. So it is also through truly human gestures, gestures that touch hearts, that the person in need is lifted up
- In all this, the humble visit cannot be replaced, and completes systemic change.





“Practical action remains insufficient unless it visibly expresses the love of fellow human beings, a love which is nourished by the encounter with Christ [...] In carrying out their charitable work, the many Catholic organisations must do more than simply collect or distribute funds, they must always be witnesses of the special attention given to the person in need”.

Encyclical letter of Pope Benedict XVI Deus Caritas est

