

More Than 1,000 Students Benefit from New School Furniture

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<http://reliefweb.int/report/liberia/more-1000-students-benefit-new-school-furniture>

(MissionNewswire) Liberia is one of the poorest countries in the world with 64 percent of its population of 3.5 million people living below the poverty line, according to the World Bank. The 2008 Human Development Index ranks Liberia in the bottom five of countries in the world. Still recovering from the effects of a 14 year civil war that ended in 2003, Liberians struggle with social and economic hardships. Those living in rural areas make up close to 75 percent of the country's poor and the World Bank classifies Liberia as a low-income, food-deficit country, reporting that half of the population is food-insecure or highly vulnerable to food insecurity. Orphans, street children and adolescent ex-combatants often find themselves on their own facing adult responsibilities with little support and no education.

Salesians have been working in Liberia since starting a vocational institute there in 1979. Since then, Salesians in the country have been developing programs with a focus on providing youth with the education and skills necessary to transform their lives and their country.

Recently, Salesian-run Don Bosco Technical High School and Mary Help of Christians Catholic High School, both located in the capital city of Monrovia, received desks, chairs and other furniture thanks to an ongoing partnership between Salesian Missions and the Institution Recycling Network (IRN). More than 1000 students at both schools benefited from the new furniture in their classrooms, libraries, laboratories and school offices.



"The children have comfortable tables and chairs to use and students, especially those in the elementary grades, are very happy with the improvement," says Father Sony Joseph Pottenplackal, rector and principal of Don Bosco Technical High School. "The furniture has contributed greatly to their discipline and learning environment, and has brought a smile to the faces of many of the young students. This has been a great contribution to the school."

Desks and chairs help to provide a more dignified and organized educational environment for students to complete their studies. As a result, students are often more focused on their classroom work and more prepared for their lessons.

Salesian Missions' partnership with IRN has provided valuable furniture to equip Salesian classrooms, offices and administrative buildings around the world, including desks, bookshelves, workstations, chairs, whiteboards, filing cabinets, auditorium seating and more.

"There was a clear match between Salesian Missions' need for furniture and equipment for their worldwide projects, and the supplies of surplus to which IRN has access," says Mark Lennon, principal of the Institution Recycling Network. "Salesian Missions has been an excellent partner."

The Institution Recycling Network was started in 1999 to match surplus items that need to be recycled with organizations and people who need them. Every education, commercial, and healthcare organization in the U.S. has surplus furniture and equipment they need to get rid of. Hundreds of millions of people living in poverty or recovering from natural disasters worldwide are in desperate need of the kinds of surplus goods these very organizations are discarding. IRN makes the match and facilitates the distribution of the surplus into the hands of the organizations and people who need it most.

IRN partners with nonprofits who are known to be reputable and effective providers of relief and development assistance, and who are able to use the types of surplus that IRN can provide. The organization has a "wish list" from each of its nonprofit partners of the types and quantities of surplus they can use.

In addition to the donation in Liberia, IRN has sent shipments of furniture and workstations to Salesian sites in Haiti, Guatemala, the Philippines, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic and Togo as well as other sites around the globe.

"IRN donations have furnished Salesian schools and development offices in Central America, South America, Africa, and Asia," explains Jessica O'Connor, property and logistics officer for Salesian Missions, the U.S. development arm of the Salesians of Don Bosco. "We plan to continue working with IRN because they are a reliable partner who is eager to assist in our mission and provide quality donations to our programs."

