

## PHILIPPINE - SOUTHERN PROVINCE

Official Language: **English**

### Vision Statement

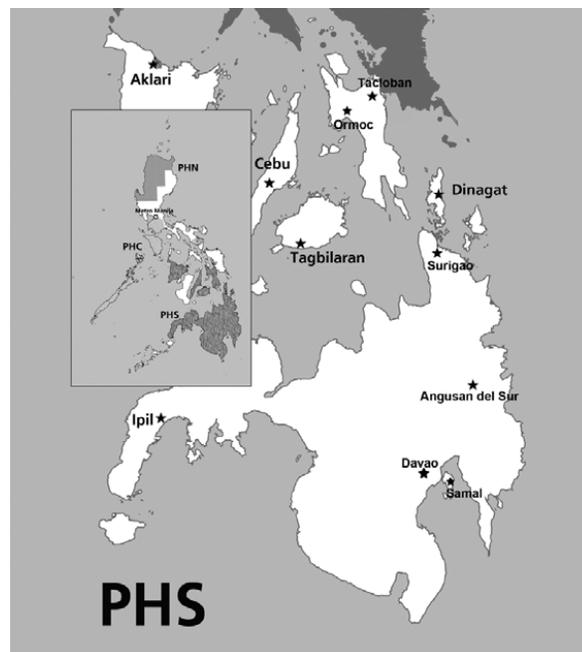
*We, members of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), an international religious-missionary congregation of brothers and priests, founded by St. Arnold Janssen and named after the Divine Word, envision a world where dialogue is possible because people, inspired by the Word of God and empowered by the Spirit, respect the uniqueness of each person and accept all nations and peoples.*

### Mission Statement

*As confreres belonging to the SVD province of the Southern Philippines, we promote and integrate in our lives and apostolates the following: Bible; Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation; Mission Animation; and Communication. We commit ourselves as individuals and communities, in our formation apostolate, in our education apostolate, and in our pastoral ministries.*

### 1. Societal Setting

The Philippines, with a population of 100 million, has been a predominantly Catholic country; 85% Catholics and 10% other Christian denominations. The Muslim population in the country is about 4%, concentrated in the southern part.



The regions covered by the PHS are the central and Southern parts of the country. The provinces where the SVDs actually work are Northern Leyte, Bohol, Cebu, Davao, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Zamboanga Sibugay and Aklan. The SVD apostolates scattered in these provinces are schools (Leyte, Cebu and Bohol), hospitals (Leyte and Bohol), JPIC (all areas), pastoral (Bohol, Cebu, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Zamboanga Sibugay), and chaplaincy with the Pink Sisters (Aklan).

There are many ethnic groups in the country, numbering a little more than 80. And in the areas where the SVD-PHS operates there is a large population of Muslims (Zamboanga Si-

bugay). There is an ethnic group where SVDs have an active pastoral intervention called the Manobos (in Agusan del Sur). Aside from the spiritual care we extend, we also organize a scholarship program for them. It is only through education that their youth can have a bright future.

Many of the SVD-PHS areas of operation became victims of a series of calamities since the beginning of the decade, where the world wide SVD took a very active part to intervene. In the span of three years, from 2011 to 2013, the southern part of the Philippines experienced major typhoons, earthquakes and flooding that claimed numerous lives and destroyed an immense amount of infrastructure and sources of livelihood of the people. The latest among the calamities, and the harshest, was typhoon Haiyan, known to be the strongest typhoon that ever visited this earth, with winds packing 250 kilometers per hour near the center.

In all these calamities, the SVDs and SVD-run institutions and organizations in the Philippines, particularly the SVD-PHS, through the help of the Generalate, SVD mission offices worldwide, and benefactors were very active in responding to the calls for help.

In the country, there is a growing challenge of violence and disrespect for human rights. The war against the ISIS-inspired Maute group in the City of Marawi in Mindanao is a concern. This war has been the most violent in the recent past. Alongside this problem is the issue of

disrespect for human rights in the national government's fight against illegal drugs. As of this writing, there are already an estimated 12,000 individuals killed in what the police claimed are the results of legitimate operations. Obviously, a good number of them were killed without the benefit of a fair trial.

Looming in congress are also issues of legalizing divorce and therapeutic abortion.

## 2. Ecclesial Setting

The SVDs work in the 3 Archdioceses (Cebu, Palo and Davao) and in 5 Dioceses (Tagbilaran, Butuan, Ipil, Surigao and Aklan). In SVD-PHS we serve as defenders of human rights, promoters of development, and providers of pastoral services.

As in many parts of the world, vocations in the Philippines are dwindling in both the religious congregations and the dioceses. The SVD has an annual average of only 5 ordinations in recent years, way below the numbers of several years ago. This number is expected to drop further with the implementation of the Education Reform in the country where recruitment and formation years will face more difficult challenges.

In urban areas, the churches are generally financially self-supporting, but in rural areas pastoral services could not be sustained without external financial assistance. Poverty remains prevalent in the country despite claims of economic gains in the past few years.

There are efforts at interreligious dialogue in the Philippines though they are limited in number. In the south, where there is a large population of Muslims, a religious congregation, in collaboration with the Muslim leaders, established a center, *Silsilah*, for interreligious dialogue among Christians and Muslims.

The impact of the SVD presence in Southern Philippines has been felt in the areas of basic evangelization, education, and communication. In basic evangelization, the SVDs are working in very challenging areas in the regions, particularly Mindanao where poverty and conflicts are prevalent. Ever since the very beginning of the SVD mission here in the Philippines, we are consistently working at the forefront of hinterland mission. In education, we have three prominent schools located in Cebu, Tagbilaran and Tacloban. One university, the University of San Carlos, gained very high prominence nationwide this year, when it harvested very many top-notchers in national board and bar examinations, particularly in the areas of law and governance, accountancy, engineering, architecture,

and pharmacy. In the field of communications, the SVDs maintain both AM and FM radio stations in Cebu and Leyte. The SVD also produces a Healing Eucharist program on TV every Sunday with nationwide broadcast. At present, the SVD has the most missionaries working in the country.

### 3. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Extra*

#### Those in Final Vows

<b>IN ACTIVE MINISTRY</b>	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
<b>Parish</b>	22	18.5	20.0	23.0
<b>Education</b>	47	39.2	30.8	24.8
Schools	12	-		
Universities	35	-		
<b>Formation/ SVD Vocation</b>	14	11.8	8.3	7.2
<b>Administration/ Support</b>	7	5.8	3.3	9.5
<b>Other Apostolates</b>	38	31.5	12.5	9.5
JPIC	10	-		
Bible	2	-		
Communication	0	-		
Mission Animation	10	-		
Others	16	-		

#### Those in Final Vows

<b>NOT IN MINISTRY</b>	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/ Orientation	18	15.0	10.8	5.0
Retired/Sick	17	14.2	7.5	7.7
Others	6	5.0	6.8	13.5

There are three main ministries in the PHS. These are education, pastoral service and formation. In addition, the province owns two tertiary hospitals and four radio stations. The details of our ministries are written below, but here is a general view of the distribution of personnel. A third of our confreres in the PHS are engaged in educational work. Most of those who work in schools are assigned to the University of San Carlos in Cebu

**Each community and pastoral district is engaged in JPIC related activities.**

City with 14,000 students. The others are working in Holy Name University in Tagbilaran City with 6,000 students and Liceo del Verbo Divino in Tacloban City with almost 2,000 students in basic education. Another third of our confreres are working in the pastoral districts of Agusan-Surigao District and Ipil district of Zamboanga Sibugay, which is the most dangerous mission of the SVDs in the Philippines because of frequent kidnap-for-ransom cases by terrorist groups. Still another third are confreres who are engaged in formation, JPIC efforts, hospital apostolates, campus ministries and communication. Many of the PHS confreres are engaged in helping street children, children in conflict with the law, cultural minorities, urban poor, out of school youths, prisoners, persons with HIV, sex workers and students. PHS JPIC has built around a thousand low cost housing units, close to a hundred pre-school buildings and has spearheaded massive relief operations during a series of calamities in southern Philippines. The rest of the confreres have retired or are in transition status.

## Characteristic Dimensions

The PHS emphasizes the Congregational Direction priorities in living out the four Characteristic Dimensions. In the Congregational Directions, both *ad intra* and *ad extra*, there are priorities that focus on the Characteristic Dimensions. These are being taken up and enhanced at community or pastoral district levels. For example, for biblical apostolate, each community or pastoral district is engaged in biblical sharing within (*ad intra*) or organizes biblical studies and bible clusters (*ad extra*). For mission animation, vacationing missionaries are invited to give talks, while bulletin boards, radio stations and websites of the SVD are also being utilized. For JPIC, each community and pastoral district is engaged in JPIC related activities. And, in communication, each community and district contributes to the maintenance of SVD websites and participates in radio programs of the SVD radio stations. Some parishes operate small radio stations.

The province has only one coordinator for the four characteristic dimensions. Consistent with its job description, he coordinates, animates, encourages and motivates each community and pastoral district to develop, live and share the four Characteristic Dimensions in line with what they have prioritized in terms of Congregational Directions.

The SVDs, through Vivat International, initiated a campaign against the spread of extra-judicial killings, reinstatement of the death penalty and

lowering the age of criminal responsibility by way of signature campaign, organizing fora, information dissemination, and an awareness campaign through T-shirt printing and tarpaulin printing.

### **Priorities among the Congregational Directions**

Each community and pastoral district chose priorities among Congregational Directions both *ad intra* and *ad extra* through a series of seminars and workshops. They have different priorities according to their location, composition, and characteristics. For the Congregational Directions enumerated by the General Chapter, all communities and districts have chosen all the priorities in the *ad intra* section while in the *ad extra* section, they have chosen only three or four directions. In the workshop, the data are collated in a matrix detailing objectives, activities, indicators of success, time lines, persons in charge and resources. Using the matrices as tools, the implementations are monitored and evaluated each year.

Indeed, the Congregational Directions proved to be helpful guiding directions for each of the communities and districts to enhance the four Characteristic Dimensions.

### **Collaboration with the SSpS and others**

The SVD collaborates with the SSpS and other religious congregations in the three major areas of apostolates: education, pastoral and JPIC. In education, we work with the SSpS in our schools as mid-level administrators or in the campus ministry section. The SVDs too are

invited to minister to the spiritual needs of the students in their high school. Similarly, they collaborate with us in our pastoral works in parishes. Likewise, in our JPIC initiatives, the SSpS join the SVDs in the work for street children, garbage dump communities, low cost housing projects and anti-trafficking of people advocacy.

Other religious congregations also work with us in different apostolates. The Benedictine sisters administer the SVD tertiary hospital in Tacloban City, while the Religious of the Good Shepherd Sisters (RGS) work with us in our interventions for sex workers and trafficked women in Cebu.

### **SVD Lay Association**

The PHS promotes lay partnership by way of Bible sharing, congregational reflection, community outreach programs, common retreats and recollections. At one point, we asked a lay couple to facilitate a recollection for the community. We try to penetrate the academic community to get them well acquainted with the SVD spirituality. At the University of San Carlos in Cebu, the administration has decided to set up an Office of the Presidential Assistant for Mission tasked to conceptualize projects to infuse the SVD identity, spirituality and tradition into the entire university system. Hopefully, through this project, more and more lay individuals will get intertwined with the SVD apostolates. Lay partners are also invited to be part of the Arnold Janssen Spirituality team.

In PHS there are several areas where we promote lay partnership. First, we have the Bible sharing group in Cebu participated in by the SVD, SSpS and lay volunteers. We call the group AJ Kabanay. Second, the SVDs collaborate with the group of Ex SVD seminarians in our work for informal settlers and SVD housing communities. The group is called the Crusaders. In Tagbilaran City where we also have a strong presence of SVDs and SSpS, a group similar to AJ Kabanay is also active.

In university communities, the SVDs collaborate with university programs like the Community Extension Services (CES) in JPIC matters. The academy, as well, has been very helpful in the various SVD workshops and seminars which utilize their skills and knowledge.

#### 4. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Intra*

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012	2005
Bishop	0	0	2
Clerics	111	105	98
Brothers (final vows)	14	11	11
Brothers (temporal vows)	10	5	2
Scholastics	2	2	4
<b>Total</b>	137	123	117

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012	2005
Average age	53.4	52.7	50.5
Nationalities	11	11	8

Along with the *ad extra* priorities, each community and pastoral district held a workshop on priorities *ad intra* and detailed the objective/s, activities, indicators of success, person in charge, timeline and resources of each. Every now and then, the results of the workshop are visited for monitoring purposes.

#### Spiritual Renewal

Time and again, the confreres in the province are reminded of the basics of spirituality in the community, particularly, the participation in daily Mass, regular Bible sharing, community meetings, periodic recollections and retreats. Once in a while, the communities also invite resource persons to give talks or spiritual conferences to members.

The PHS provincial administration encourages all confreres to take opportunities for spiritual renewal like the renewal courses in Nemi and the Third Age Course for the senior confreres.