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The Relationship between the Provincial Treasurer and the Local Treasurers

Formation of Local Treasurers

*by Marceliano Oabel, C.M.
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When I was aspiring to become a Vincentian, one very concrete inspiration that attracted me to join the Little Company was the spirit of **involvement**.

This same spirit now enshrined in our new Provincial Mission and Vision Statement says that “...we *commit ourselves* and our *resources* to a renewed integral evangelization of the poor.”

In my Internal Seminary formation, reading the conferences of St. Vincent, I was made to understand that our resources are the resources of the poor. Consequently we are simply administrators of our “masters” resources.

Managing effectively our “masters” resources entails good provincial structure to support our mission and vision. This is precisely one of the reasons why in each province there is a treasurer to administer the goods of the province under the direction and vigilance of the Visitor and his Council. The treasurer is named by the Visitor with the consent of his council mainly to assist them in the administration of the goods of the province; in particular, in the ways in which these goods must be maintained and produced for the needs of the ministry and the welfare of the missionaries.

On the local level, this same structure must be duplicated to assist the local superior in managing community resources. Therefore, in each local house there must be a local treasurer to administer the goods of the house under the direction of the local superior.

Working Relationship: Provincial Treasurer and Local Treasurers

In the area of administration of goods of the community, the local treasurers as administrators of goods must give an account to the Provincial Treasurer and keep the superior and members informed of their administration. An accounting of receipts and expenditures and report on the status of the patrimony are to be examined each year by the Provincial Treasurer. The local

treasurers shall submit their financial reports each year and subject them to a regular annual audit to check the accuracy of the report and good administration. The local treasurers also submit a yearly inventory report of all assets and liabilities to the Provincial Treasurer's Office for proper accounting.

The local treasurer shall prepare for his community and the Provincial Treasurer's Office the following:

A. Monthly

1. Summary of Income and Expenses
2. Current cash flow
3. Photocopy of Bank Book reflecting the entire month's transactions
4. Photocopy of Bank statement
5. VAT-able (value added tax) receipts of purchases

B. Year-End

1. Inventory of Assets
2. Inventory of Properties and Equipment
3. Advances/Loans Subsidiary ledger
4. List of employees/workers and their salary and benefits

Formation of Local Treasurers

Acknowledging the heavy responsibilities of the local treasurers coupled with the lack of professional training in accounting and management, our province initiated avenues to supplement what is lacking in a form of ongoing formation.

1. Formulation and publication of a *Provincial Handbook on Financial Administration*
2. Computerization of Accounting Systems (provincial and local levels)
3. Training and ongoing formation of lay staff (provincial and local level)
4. Sending confreres to formal studies in Accounting and Management Courses (MBA)
5. Conduct training and ongoing seminars on "Accounting for Non-Accountants"
6. Attending regular training sessions and seminars conducted every year by the Philippine Association of Religious Treasurers (P.A.R.T.) on:

- a. Philippine Taxation
 - b. Social Security Service Seminar
 - c. Human Relations Seminar
 - d. Insurance Policy Seminar
 - e. Basic Bookkeeping Seminar for Non-Accountants
 - f. Seminar on Wages and other Benefits
 - g. Seminar on Labor Code
 - h. Seminar on Handling People
 - i. Quarterly Spiritual Recollection
 - j. Seminar on Hiring and Firing Employees
 - k. Special Skills Training Seminar
7. Procurement and distribution of books on “Accounting for Non-Accountants”
 8. Appointment and training of local lay bookkeepers to assist the local treasurers
 9. Regular meeting with local treasurers on budget preparation and budget performance evaluation
 10. Training of local lay bookkeepers (local level)

Training of Local Lay Bookkeepers

In 2001, after listening to the stories and concerns of our local treasurers, our province launched a training program for *local lay bookkeepers* of different houses. This was in view of eliminating some work of the local treasurers so they can attend to other equally important tasks of their ministry. Most of our recruits were high school graduates but highly trainable for the tasks. So far the program has helped us improve regular and accurate reporting by the local treasurers. Above all, we discovered one very important truth: that we Vincentians are not only serving the poor but also being served by the poor. This realization changed our attitude towards them and made us humbler in working with them. From this initial experience we explored further the involvement of our graduates and graduating student assistants to manage our farm, school canteen, water-purifying station, net centers and other business ventures of the province. Happily, our student assistant program and the local lay bookkeepers became the vital source of trained personnel for the province.

(Note: The Student Assistants Program is a scholarship program for young people working with and for us in exchange for free board and lodging, free tuition fees, transportation allowance, book allowance, project allowance and other miscellaneous expenses. Most of the grantees are recruits from our apostolates who have no other access to good education.)

Personal Relationship: Provincial Treasurer and Local Treasurers

In my two years stay in the office of the Provincial Treasurer there were absolutely a lot of things to learn and unlearn. The following three points are just a humble insight on improving the relationship between the Provincial Treasurer and Local Treasurers:

1. Listening. I thought that listening is only good for counseling, but I realized that some of the problems I encountered in the Office of the Provincial Treasurer were problems in listening. Confreres who came from remote parishes, mission centers, formation houses and schools, need not only material help, but listeners to their stories: stories of rich pastoral importance that need to be shared and listened to. This perspective made me realize that the office of the Provincial Treasurer is not only a ministry of giving, but of receiving; not only a ministry of spending money, but of spending time with the confreres; not only making accounts for depreciation, but showing appreciation; not only inventory of assets, but collections of stories. To improve the working relationship between the Provincial Treasurer and Local Treasurers is to improve the much-neglected personal ministry of listening.

2. Witnessing. After my ordination in 1992, I remember a Daughter of Charity told me that the most important ministry of a treasurer is **witnessing**; concretely, **simplicity of lifestyle**. How the Office of the Provincial Treasurer affects our lifestyle is a paramount importance into which we need to look. This is an area that we, Provincial Treasurers, are invited to consider seriously in order to improve our relationships with confreres and local treasurers.

3. Care. Fraternal care is a key to the office we are holding. Decisions and actions made by the Provincial Treasurer's Office should be expressions of fraternal care, especially toward those in poor areas. St. Vincent took care of the poor. We are entrusted with the task of taking care of our confreres who take care of the poor. Good relationships are established when confreres and local treasurers feel they are cared for by the province.

*... all our possessions derive their meaning from our evangelization and service of the poor.**

originale

* Miguel Pérez Flores, C.M. and Antonino Orcajo, C.M., *The Way of St. Vincent is Our Way*, English translation edited by Charles T. Plock, C.M. (Eastern Province, Congregation of the Mission: Philadelphia, 1995) 410.