

# A lasting impact

Developing a system that helps people help themselves in the Republic of Chad

## Did you know?

Fr. Huy was inspired to work in Africa after studying at DWC with students who were part of a group known as the Lost Boys of Sudan.



When Fr. Huy Tran, SVD, arrived in the Republic of Chad for his overseas training as a seminarian, he wanted to help build a ministry that would serve the community long after his time in the village.

Divine Word Missionaries had just arrived in the country and were working to establish methods for their ministry there. The 2009 DWC grad was eager to make a difference.

## If you teach a man to type

He started in 2015 by establishing and teaching the first computer class available in the region at any educational level. Four students signed up for the first class and eight enrolled in the second. As interest in the class grew, so did the number of people who learned Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

By 2017, Fr. Huy returned to the United States to complete preparation for ordination. In his absence, the computer program continued with his earliest pupils taking over as teachers and educating new groups of young people about the technology. When he returned as an ordained priest, Fr. Huy says he was pleased to see his concept for a sustainable computer class was working. Since then, Fr. Huy has been managing the area's Catholic Elementary school, serving as one of two parish priests to 48 mission stations and pitching in anywhere else he's needed.

## Responsibility and sustainability

After his ordination, Fr. Huy says he quickly noticed a harsh

reality about the area. The people in the village were happy to accept help from missionaries but they viewed it as a gift. When Divine Word Missionaries drilled a well to provide clean drinking water, the people were grateful. However, when the hand pump on it broke, they asked the missionaries to fix it rather than looking for a solution.

"If you give them the well 100 percent, they don't appreciate it even though they need funding and they need water,"

Fr. Huy said. "Because it's falling down from the sky. They think it's not theirs, it belongs to the priest."

That's when he says the missionary group decided to take a different approach. They continued to supervise projects like the drilling of wells and construction of new schools but first they required local participation. The villagers needed to come up with 10 to 15 percent of a project's total cost and form a maintenance committee before the missionaries

would start any work. The money often came from collection at Sunday services and could take quite a while to collect but by asking them to invest, Fr. Huy says it ensured that the people of the community would take ownership in the projects.

"Sometimes it breaks my heart, asking poor people to chip in but you have to take that route, there's no other way around it," he said. Since implementing the new model with local participation, Fr. Huy said the tribes in the villages are stepping up and taking responsibility for the projects, schools and churches in their communities.



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[www.dwci.edu/FrHuyVideo](http://www.dwci.edu/FrHuyVideo)  
to hear about  
Fr. Huy's  
experience  
in Chad.