



Misioneros de la  
Preciosa Sangre

## Building the Future

Classroom construction project for Safim's High School adolescents / young people of Guinea - Bissau (Safim-Bissaquel).

### Introduction

In our country, **Guinea - Bissau**, education is a constant struggle with our rulers, who do not look at the poorest population, do not care if people know how to read; in this way, they do not support the development of education, mainly the construction of schools. In the absence of this support from the government, **many children, adolescents and young people can not continue their studies**, because in their area, town or city there are no institutes.

Meanwhile, Safim's high school was created to minimize the suffering of students, but where it is located today is a borrowed site. **Every time there are more students and less physical space to function**, or to realize the dream of many young people who want to continue studying.

In order to respond to this need, the rooms of the parish (which are for catechesis) are transformed into classrooms to support many students, so that they are not left out. Despite this, **many are left without the possibility of studying** because there is no space and there are no suitable conditions: they are small classrooms, with shared tables of three people, it is uncomfortable because there is no where to lean well to write. The situation is difficult and painful, there are more and more shortages. There is no support from the government, it is the missionaries who assume the responsibility of the non-profit school, for the requests of the Safim sector.

The **needs** of the school are the following:

- Need for ten classrooms
- Construction of four bathrooms
- Academic teacher's office
- A meeting room
- Two computer rooms (now they do not have any).
- It does not have a library, the students do not have a place to study or investigate, it does not have a study room.
- It does not have enough tables or chairs for students.
- Lack of energy. The school needs solar panels.
- Computers...

The sector of **Safim** is in the region of Biombo, 15 km from the capital Bissau, but it is in the poorest region of the country, with a very high percentage of children, adolescents and young people who **do not have the possibility of going to school in the first years**, to start from childhood to high school; some are incorporated only later, or they go on their own when they are adults. In our institute we have many cases of boys who on their own began to go to school.

### **Justification: Foundation**

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood assumed the **Parish / Mission of Safim in 2005** at the request of the diocesan bishop. At that time the population was smaller. In Safim there was only one primary school, up to fourth grade. The Mission had a ward that is under the care of the San José de Cluny sisters. But in Safim there was another school under the responsibility of the Evangelical Church, which operates in precarious conditions. The missionaries held conversations with other people, to find out how they could help. They realized that **Safim did not have an institute for so many young people who wanted to study**. Those who continued, they had to go to Bissau every day. This way was only for those who had the possibility; the others could not continue studying.

There was a government building, but without a roof, that needed the cover, doors and windows, so the missionaries spoke with those in charge and decided to support, fix the school and put it into operation. And from then they thought of opening an institute until the fourth course of secondary education.

The Institute started operating in **2007 / 2008**, with a population of 630 inhabitants. At that time it was not possible to respond to the needs of all the requests of the students who wanted to return to study again, due to lack of space, because **there were only three classrooms**. It is a shared school: in the mornings it works as a school and in the evenings as an institute.

The reason for the creation of this initiative, on the one hand, has to do with **the economic and financial difficulty of parents** and those in charge of education in investing in the education of their children; and, on the other hand, parents are not sufficiently aware of the importance of education for the future of their children. Many parents give more value to domestic work; Traditional agriculture is the only way that many have to support their families.

We are faced with the fact that parents and caregivers are unaware of the value of education. Children should not continue to suffer because of that, we think that we are urged to ask for help in order to minimize the difficulty of them. The large number of **these adolescents and young people demonstrates their desire to study** in order to achieve their future, their long-awaited dreams: to be trained men and women. The most vulnerable part are the women who end up being subjected to early marriage before finishing their studies.

In recent years we have received requests from students to expand the school, to create a library for them, a simple computer room, more space for students. From this fact, we judge that **there is a great need to help them** to guarantee a better future. We want to do it, but we do not have the possibility of supporting them all, we lack financial means.

Our intention is **to give opportunity to disadvantaged adolescents and young people without financial means, to pay for their studies and transportation.** The majority of adolescents and young people in our country live in a situation without a prepared and guaranteed future, due to the lack of parents; they are families that live with **less than 1 euro per day**, from traditional agriculture, with difficult situations.

Some adolescents and young people have parents who are public workers, but **who do not receive their salaries at the end of the month.** The parents' main concern is to guarantee the daily lunch first, not thinking about the "small lunch" (breakfast) and dinner. Only later do they think about the studies of the children.

In addition, **the educational system in Guinea - Bissau is very poor**, with a lack of quality in education, especially in public schools where, stricken by constant strikes, the State no longer has the capacity to control education. In all this situation, who suffers the most is the rural population.

Nowadays the **Communities, Dioceses and Missionaries** working in the country are taking responsibility for public schools (called self-management, which is a concerted system), in order to keep their children in school. Most of them are administered by the Catholic Church and the missionaries who work throughout the territory.

The school belongs to the State (building, pavilion, classes), but as they can not maintain it without strikes, **the Church - together with the local community** - assume the management through an economic contribution for each student, to ensure the monthly salary of the teachers. In this way, teachers' strike is avoided. On the other hand, parents are encouraged to take responsibility for their children's education. This way, the risks of staying at home and the appearance of addictions, delinquency, etc., are avoided.

Our region (Biombo / Safim) is not immune to this situation, especially since it is close to the capital Bissau (where the risks of social exclusion or crime are greater). Most families live of the "*castanha de cajú*" (cashew), from traditional agriculture and they have **enormous difficulties in keeping their children in school.** In addition to that, they can not guarantee daily food, because they are large families with many economic needs.

The importance of financially supporting the construction of an institute in Safim is to contribute first to development: **to build a better society, to guarantee education and the future of many adolescents and young people.**

This is an initiative of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood and the local community with the aim of improving the level of literacy.

*"Si bu djuda un mininu na bai pa escola, bu djuda na kumpu un sociedadadi mindjor"*  
*"If you help a child go to school, you help build a better society."*