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Impact of little-known charity felt around the world

by Dan Morris-Young

NCR Today

More than 95 percent of its donors' contributions reach the projects it supports, projects that have taken place in more than 30 countries.

Yet, hardly anyone has heard of the small San Francisco-based charity -- La Madre de los Pobres -- that will mark its 30th anniversary this fall.

Founded by San Francisco's legendary Franciscan Fr. Alfred Boeddeker, La Madre has invested in efforts from helping HIV/AIDS orphans in Tanzania to assisting a health clinic in Guatemala, according to a recent feature story in *Catholic San Francisco* by Valerie Schmalz.

The late pastor of San Francisco's St. Boniface Parish, Boeddeker is much better known for founding the city's famed St. Anthony's Dining Room 61 years ago. It now serves nearly a million meals a year to the Tenderloin district's poor as well as providing free health and social services.

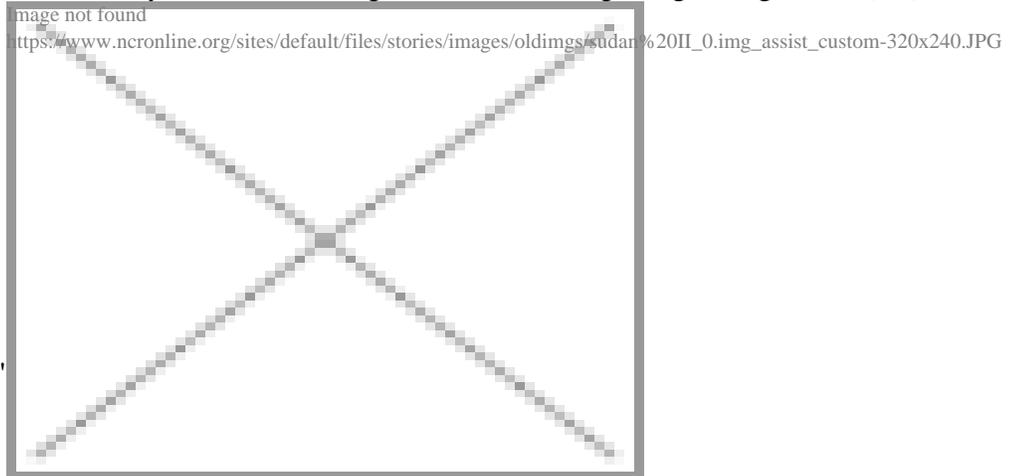
However, the impact of La Madre has also been impressive via the modest grants it provides, typically placing them directly into the hands of missionaries in the field. Most grants are \$2,000 to \$3,000.

"It's a very small-scale operation and we try to work with people who help people on a small scale effectively," La Madre board member Gregory Gollnick told Schmalz.

The retired airline pilot said, "We've got a project in Eritrea where we gave them a cow and she had a calf and they named the cow Madre."

Schmalz reported that a December 2010 letter from Capuchin Franciscan Fr. Zerayakob O. Michael to La Madre included photos of the cow with the little school community in

Dekemhare, Eritrea, and stated, "Thanks to your esteemed organization we are getting enough milk (for)



all members of our community."

La Madre's president, Frank Clark, told *NCR* that the charity's annual budget fluctuates, but "it is usually about \$40,000."

"We send it out as fast as we get it," he said.

His daughter, Mary Clark, has been a regular overseas volunteer for the group, bringing her skills as a family nurse practitioner to bear on work from training midwives in Ethiopia to patching-up persons wounded in South Sudan violence.

The charity works primarily out of Saints Peter and Paul Church in San Francisco. It has no paid staff. Its website: www.lamadre.org.

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Its board of directors includes now-retired Society of Foreign Missions Fr. Jean Paul Guillet, who once headed the missionary office of the International Catholic Organization for Cinema and Audiovisual (OCIC) and who is credited with being the moving force behind establishment of more than 150 radio broadcasting facilities in sub-Saharan Africa.

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