



Vincentian Family Global Initiative on Homelessness

Introduction

2017 marks the 400th Year Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism. In particular, we refer to the story of the poor and ailing family in the parish of Chatillon and Vincent's realization that for charity to be effective for this family, and for others, it must be properly organized - "it is not enough to do good, we must do it well."

At the time of writing, Vincent would have had no idea how such a simple idea would grow into an international movement incorporating many different religious and lay organizations who claim Vincent as their founder and the organization of charity as their mission. Nor would Vincent have guessed at the size and scale of the works of charity being currently undertaken by the Vincentian Family globally, serving millions of the world's "poorest of the poor". Of those served by the Vincentian Family, many fall into the broader definition of being homeless - whether physically living on the streets or in shelters, refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people or those living in temporary settlements such as slums or favelas. In its most recent report on the issue, the UN Settlements Agency estimates that over 1.2 billion of the 7 billion people on this planet are homeless in one form or other and that this will grow as a result of conflict, natural disaster and urbanization.

The attached proposed project plan was commissioned by the Heads of the Vincentian Family at their annual gathering in January 2017. It proposes that Depaul International will manage, on behalf of the global Vincentian Family, a joint project focusing on addressing "homelessness in its many guises" as the worldwide, unifying theme to celebrate our shared 400th Anniversary. In summary, the aim of this initiative would be:

- to make a real and sustainable difference to the lives of thousands of homeless people globally
- to build a strong network between Vincentian groups working across the broad spectrum of homelessness
- to support and develop existing and emerging leaders
- to share best practice across agencies
- to encourage the growth of new services and, reflecting on our collective Vincentian experiences,
- to lobby for structural change in support of homeless people at a national, regional and global level
- To develop and make available formation materials in support of this initiative with respect to Vincentian Spirituality.

Background

With some (notable) exceptions, the different branches of the Vincentian Family have often planned and managed their charitable activities in isolation from each other, along the lines of either their own particular specialisms (e.g. education, health, social work, advocacy), or their more generic mission to serve the poor (SVP), or because of their geographical or political isolation. To date, this has been an effective and pragmatic approach to the Vincentian emphasis on “action rather than words” and the need for accountable management and local ownership. However, as the world has become smaller and more connected, the Vincentian world is changing. In particular, over the last 20 years, we have seen the evolution of two concepts within the Vincentian Family – **Collaboration** and **Systemic Change**.

Collaboration within the Vincentian Family is not an entirely new concept. It was the default management model from the very birth of the charism. The close partnership between the CM's, Daughters of Charity and Ladies of Charity clearly allowed the early Vincentian movement to maximize the impact it had collectively for the poor at a local, national and international level. Today, collaboration is in part fueled by the growing pace of globalization in all sectors and by technological advances that make the communication of ideas and ideologies much simpler and straightforward. Likeminded people are grouping together everywhere. In part, this coming together of the Vincentian Family is also being encouraged by a conscious or sub-conscious realization of the critical need to plan for a new future, given patterns of growth and decline of the family in different parts of the world. More recently, academics at Stanford University have called this the ability of movements, such as the Vincentian Family, to have a collective impact.

Systemic change is at the heart of what Frederick Ozanam hoped the Vincentian Family might deliver. The ability not just to provide charity to those most in need but also to advocate for justice by analyzing why people need our help and working with them to change the systems that trap them in poverty. This process implies the direct involvement of the people living in poverty for a better understanding and solution to the problems. This collaboration with the poor will be central to the working of this new initiative. The programs instituted by the Vincentian Family Commission on Systemic Change have built great capacity and understanding in this area.

The outstanding issue for the Vincentian Family is that, having encouraged this appetite and capacity for collaboration and having invested in training on systemic change, how will we use it? How will we manage it? How can we balance the subsidiarity of our own branch or our organizational needs and mission with the solidarity that comes with being part of the Vincentian Family?

Project Proposal

The Institute of Global Homelessness, as a Vincentian Partnership between DePaul University and DePaul International, recently worked with experts from the worlds of academia, service delivery, policy and advocacy to create the first-ever global definition of homelessness which has been acknowledged by the UN. It defines homelessness under broad three headings;

- (1) *People without accommodation*; e.g. street sleepers

- (2) *People living in temporary accommodation*; e.g. refugee camps or internally displaced people
- (3) *People living in inadequate/insecure accommodation*; e.g. slums and favelas, bed and breakfast, hostels

Whilst we have no collective statistics to verify the level of Vincentian engagement in these areas of homelessness, anecdotally the Vincentian Family is known to be one of the biggest global providers of services to these differing groups, who represent some of the poorest and most disenfranchised people in the world.

As was said in the introduction, this paper proposes that the Vincentian Family might focus on addressing “homelessness in its many guises” as the global, unifying theme to celebrate our shared 400th Anniversary. In summary, the aim of this initiative would be: to build a strong network between Vincentian groups working across the broad area of homelessness; to support and develop existing and emerging leaders; to share best practice across agencies; to encourage the growth of new services; and, reflecting on our collective Vincentian experiences, to lobby for structural change in support of homeless people at a national, regional and global level. This thematic flows naturally out of the 2017 agreed goal of the Vincentian Family to collaborate around the idea of “I was a stranger and you welcomed me”. It is envisaged that this 3-year pilot would extend into a commitment up until 2030 in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in which the European Union, our forum of the launching of this initiative, is playing a leading role.

There are two additions to this paper

- The project plan
- The summary budget

Project Plan

The project plan covers seven areas:

- Using Measurement and Data
- Planning Together
- Building Global Capacity
- Institute of Global Homelessness
- Encouraging Structural Change
- Communicating Progress
- Formation.

Budget

The ~~attached~~ budget costs for this project is USD \$550,000. It is a little over our initial estimate of \$500,000 but having dropped into the detail we believe this will deliver the project to the quality desired. It is envisaged that part of the core money will come from the Global Vincentian Family itself and part will come from other donations. Separate fundraising will be required for new works resulting from this initiative.

Other Issues to Consider

At the meeting of the Heads of the Vincentian Family I was asked to address the following questions and concerns.

What is the envisaged length of time for this project? 3-5 years or until 2030?

The proposed project plan is for three years at which time a review will take place by the Heads of the Vincentian Family. However for an initiative of this kind to be effective it must take a long term view as has been proven by the example of the Jesuit Refugee Service. With that in mind it is recommended that the project (if the pilot proves successful) should run until 2030 at the earliest in sync with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The project must be faith based and Vincentian Values must be evident?

The central pillar of Vincentian collaboration is our shared spirituality and values. This will permeate every strategy but section seven of the project plan deals specifically with Formation. We will develop and make available spiritual formation materials linked to this initiative.

Section 4.3 of the project plan talks about the Symposium on Street Homelessness and Catholic Social Teaching to be held at the Vatican 30th November – 1st December at which Pope Francis will present some thoughts on this area. The resulting catholic social teaching will provide a useful framework for a faith response to homelessness in its many forms.

It must have a direct impact on the poor?

Clearly the initiative will have failed if it does not increase the capacity of the Vincentian Family in addressing homelessness. The plan outlines a process leading to significant change for thousands of homeless people globally through careful mapping, planning and then action. By the end of 2018 we should be in a position to specify particular output, outcome and impact measures allowing heads of the Vincentian Family to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative.

Governance? What is the role of the VFEC? What is the relationship of this project to other commissions within VFEC? What is the relationship to Depaul International?

The project will be managed by Depaul International and like any other externally funded project it will be subject to scrutiny through its normal reporting systems. However it will also be accountable to a separate commission of VFEC made up of nominated members from across the Vincentian Family with one or two independent specialists. This commission will meet twice a year and report through VFEC directly to the Heads of the Vincentian Family at their annual meeting. Any changes to the agreed strategy or budget would need to be approved by the commission and the VFEC.

With regard to its relationship to other commissions within VFEC, we would include them in any work which overlaps. This is particularly the case with the Systemic Change Commission.

What are the fundraising expectations?

As Depaul International is being commissioned by the Vincentian Family to manage this project it would have no responsibility to raise the \$550,000 core funding for this project. However it will assist groups with developing fundraising strategies for particular projects that might stem from this initiative. For example, the funding for the Symposium on Street Homelessness and Catholic Social Teaching at the Vatican has already been funded entirely by the IGH as part of DePaul University alongside the other Vincentian Universities in the USA plus one global foundation.

Next Steps

This project plan and budget was discussed on May 5, 2017 by the sub-group nominated by the Heads of the Vincentian Family at their January 2017 meeting – Fr Tomaz, Fr Bob, Sr Veronika, Edmond, Joe and myself.

Following any revisions, the papers will be circulated to the heads of the Vincentian Family for final approval as soon as possible given a starting date of June 28, 2017.

Mark McGreevy

Group CEO Depaul International

May 2017