

# Famvin Homeless Alliance

## Impact Report



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## Who we are

The Famvin Homeless Alliance (FHA) is a Vincentian Family initiative supporting established and emerging homelessness initiatives across the globe. We understand homelessness as the reality of those living on the street, refugees and those displaced from their home, and slum dwellers in inadequate housing.

## Our vision

Everyone has a place to call home and a stake in their community.

## Contact us

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# Foreword

This Famvin Homeless Alliance (FHA) Impact Report comes at a time of global apprehension and uncertainty. However, one thing is certain, Vincentian service for people experiencing homelessness around the world has never been more needed. The corona virus pandemic has clearly highlighted the importance and urgency for people having a place to call home. One in which to feel safe from disease, but also to rebuild one's own life.

The FHA was set up in 2017 to mark the 400th anniversary of the Vincentian Charism. Its main goals are to support established and emerging Vincentian homelessness programs around the world, and to advocate for global systemic change to end homelessness in its various forms.

To do so, FHA has strived to provide a framework to foster collaboration and exchange amongst Vincentian Family branches. In 2018, the FHA organized a first conference on street homelessness, which gave rise to the "13 Houses" Campaign. The objective was to change the lives of 10,000 homeless people in 5 years. In only 2 years, the Campaign has reached nearly half of that target, through 54 collaborative projects in 40 countries.

In relation to systemic change the FHA was active in bringing together Vincentian Family members at the United Nation. They focussed on supporting a campaign, led by the Institute of Global Homelessness based at DePaul University, aimed at raising the profile of street homelessness as a global issue. As a direct result of this campaign homelessness became the central theme of the UN Commission on Social Development in February 2020. This is the first time in its 75 year history that the UN has focussed on homelessness and it led to a resolution, approved by the UN General Assembly, paving the way for a reduction in homelessness to be a measurable target within the Sustainable Development Goals. As part of this ongoing lobby FHA members also contributed to a book on "Catholic Social Teaching and Homelessness" in collaboration with the Vatican.

In response to recent events the FHA showcased the resilience and alertness of Vincentians who sprung to action as the pandemic took hold of different



countries, and after the terrible explosions which left more than 300,000 homeless in Beirut. Two fundraising appeals helped the emergency efforts run by various Vincentian groups in over 15 countries.

In short, for the past three years, the FHA has been the witness of the global vibrancy of Vincentians committed to ending homelessness at all levels supported by our 14 trained FHA "Ambassadors" drawn from different parts of the Vincentian Family from across the globe. From local projects for street children in small rural towns, to housing programs in big cities, to advocacy coalitions at the UN. We hope this Vincentian Family mobilization will continue in the years to come.

A second conference on refugees and displaced populations, due to take place in 2020, has been rescheduled to the Autumn of 2021 due to the current health crisis. A third conference, on slum dwellers, is also scheduled for the near future. FHA aims to continue developing these and other concrete opportunities for Vincentians to serve the homeless together.

We thank all of the Vincentian Family branches who have actively taken part in the FHA, the Vincentian Family Executive Board, the FHA Commission members, FHA "Ambassadors" and all donors who have made the past three years possible, keeping alive the Vincentian Charism, and bringing hope to the most marginalized.

**Mark McGreevy**  
**FHA Coordinator**

# Changing lives around the world

Vincentians are helping to transform thousands of lives around the world. Here a few examples from different countries. Although each story is unique, all are equally important and they show how different branches are tackling concrete realities. After all, as Vincent said: “*God asks for our good will, a firm, genuine disposition to seize every opportunity of serving Him*”.

## Véronique, 91, Rwanda/Burundi

*“My name is Véronique and I am 91. I have been in the Mahama Refugee Camp in Rwanda since 2015 with my granddaughter. In the five years that I have been here, life has not been easy. There is not a single day that I have had enough food. Many times, I only have porridge before I go to sleep, and then I sleep badly because my stomach always wants more. I feel dizzy at night because of hunger. Now with Covid, the situation has gotten worse, especially for us who are old. We have even less food for all of us in the camp. I know that God does not forget us, and this morning our Chaplain, Father Henri Matsinga CM, visited me and gave me money to buy me something to eat, some salt and some oil. His visit reassured me that God really is present with us at this very difficult time of not knowing when this disease will disappear in the world. I am convinced that God will not allow this disease to kill all these human beings created with Love.”*



## Antônio Manuel, 53, Brazil

*“I’m Antônio Manuel, 53, from Juiz de Fora. I was born in a neighbourhood marked by death, where children do not have a childhood. I started sleeping on the street due to family problems. I learn to hide hunger with alcohol and to take drugs. When I’m on the streets I’m sad, anxious and I cry a lot. Since I saw a group of people in a van with the letters SSVP I started to smile again, because I only heard good things from men and women who call me “brother”, and bring me food and blankets. Now they have a big trailer to take a hot shower, shave and where I can pick up new clothes. I cried under the shower because there are still good people in this world. I pray to God for them. I was bitter and angry with God, a little disappointed with human beings, but I started smiling again because I got Vincentian friends who take care of me.”*

## Rolando, 40, Philippines

Rolando, 40, used to live in a low-lying area prone to floods in Brgy, Quezon City, Philippines. They were sharing a small compound with six other families. When typhoon Ketsana (Yolanda) came in 2009, a large number of families were forced to vacate their homes and many people died. Thanks to the Vincentian Foundation, now Rolando, his wife Ryza and their daughter afflicted with cerebral palsy are safe living in the Bamboo Housing project. This housing project was developed by the Vincentian Foundation in partnership with Base Bahay Foundation Inc., exclusively for families with children with special needs and elderly. By using local bamboo as a building material, the project is greener and more sustainable. Rolando is now the president of their community association.



## Flore, 40, Côte d'Ivoire/Spain

*“My name is Flore, I’m from Côte d’Ivoire. I had to scape my violent husband. He has good connections with authorities and I couldn’t report him. I left for Morocco and then I crossed the sea to Spain. There, by God’s grace, I found the Vincentian Family. They have given me a new life, joy, love, safety, training, a job, a home and a myriad of small help. Now I am a cook in the shelter for refugees managed by the Vincentian Family Organisation that belongs to the “13 Houses” Campaign. Now I live with a certain ease, my asylum application is on the second stage. I am very grateful to God for the support of the Vincentian Family. I pray for so many women escaping from similar situations.”*



## Ihor, 61, Ukraine

Ihor, 61, moved cities in Ukraine with his wife and daughter just before lockdown restrictions early in 2020. Ihor and his family could neither return to the city they were living nor find a job. His family stayed with a friend, but Ihor had to sleep on the doorway due to lack of space. He approached Depaul Ukraine Street Outreach in Odessa and asked for help. Within just a few days, they had managed to help Ihor find a roof and job through a partner. He can now provide food for his wife and daughter while they look for jobs. Ihors is already planning to save some money to rent a small apartment for his family so that they can all be together again.



# The 13 Houses Campaign

Since 2018...



40 countries



54 Projects



1263 homes



5281 People



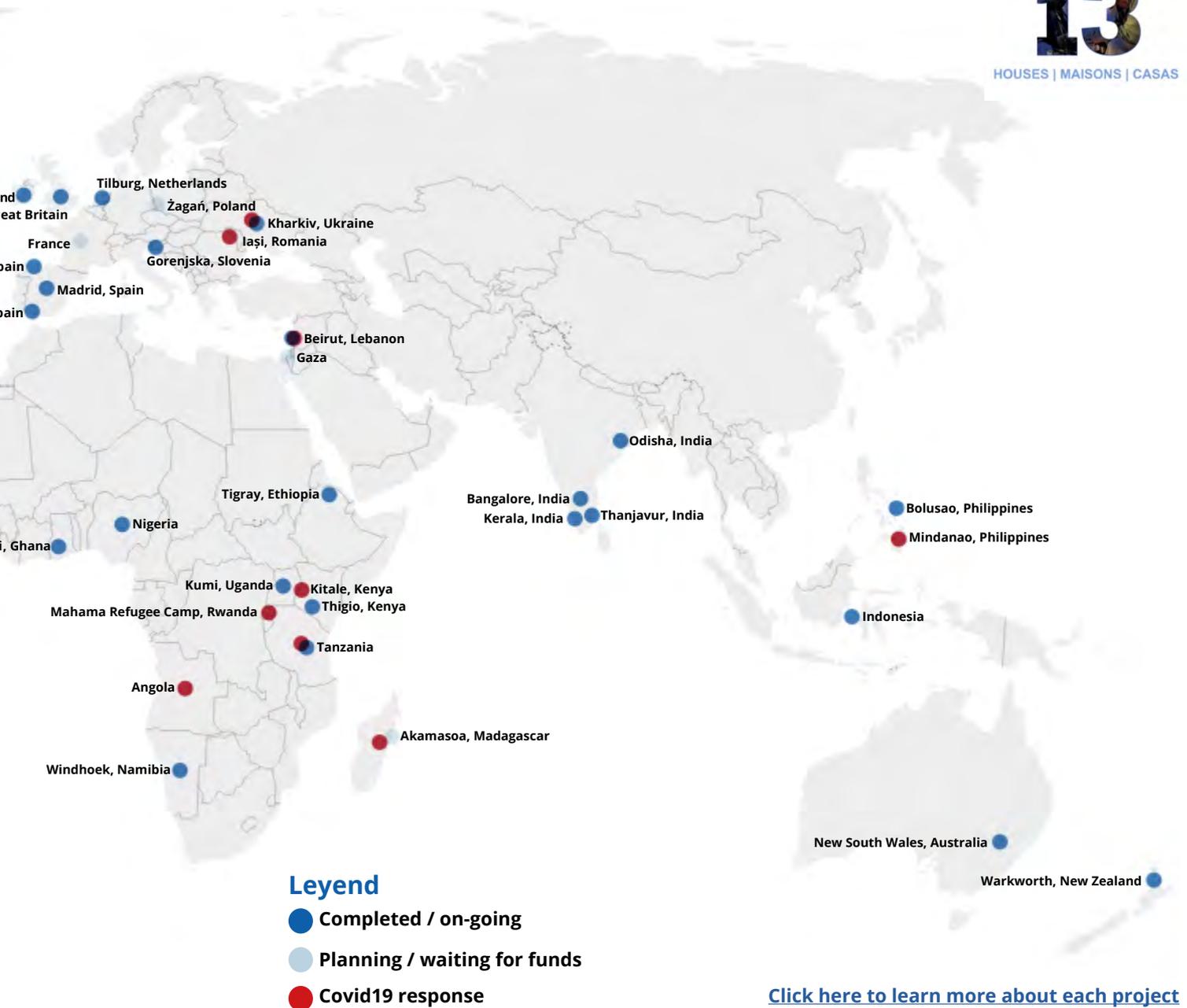
In 2018, the 13 Houses Campaign set out with the goal of transforming the lives of 10,000 homeless people around the world over the next five years. The Campaign sought to facilitate collaboration across the Vincentian Family and bring together different projects united by one objective: ending homelessness.

Within one year, the Campaign had grown from a single house in Little Rock, Arkansas (USA), to 37 projects across 28 countries. These projects ranged from house refurbishments and social support in Lebanon to a community mentoring scheme in Madagascar.

The common threads that tie the 13 Houses projects together are their collaborative nature, their

commitment to systemic change, and their tailored, individualised method. The Campaign never sought to prescribe one single solution and providing accommodation is just the start. Rather, the “13 houses” is a metaphor for efforts that provide shelter, food, education, employment, financial security, healthcare, sanitation, safety, mentorship, community, warmth, advocacy opportunities and hope for a brighter future.

In the midst of the Campaign’s second year, Covid-19 accelerated around the world. Those living on the streets were more at risk than ever as they are denied the possibility of social distancing and maintaining good hygiene. The Vincentian Family sprang into action. The



FHA launched an urgent appeal and raised \$75,000, all of which directly supported Vincentian initiatives that emerged in response to the crisis. For instance, in Ecuador, all nine branches of the Vincentian Family teamed up to take part in a national campaign that helped over 2,000 impoverished families.

After the blast in Beirut on August 4th, the FHA and the Vincentian Family Office (VFO) launched the fundraising campaign “From our hearts to the heart of Lebanon”. Over \$200,000 were raised on behalf of the Lebanese Vincentians to support the victims, thanks to institutional donors, Vincentians branches from the five continents and many individual donors.

These quick, tangible reactions of the Vincentian Family must not only continue once the pandemic subsides, they must also evolve. The 13 Houses Campaign embarked on a journey to end homelessness, one home at a time. When reflecting on this goal, our work so far, and the effects of the pandemic, the importance of the Campaign’s 13 provisions and the common threads running through each of our projects, is magnified.

Our journey so far has only reaffirmed the significance of our objective and our commitment to ending homelessness.

# Our ambassadors

Our volunteer Ambassadors are a group of 14 Vincentians based across the world. They have been crucial in helping the FHA team spread the word about our work, expanding of the 13 Houses Campaign and our appeals to support Vincentian initiatives during Covid19 and the blast in Beirut.

Our ambassadors work in their communities and within existing Vincentian Family structures to encourage engagement and help those serving our homeless neighbours. They represent the diversity of the Vincentian Family, with a range of ages, backgrounds, continents and branches.



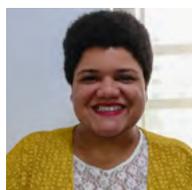
**Luis Absel Camarena**  
Guatemala  
Congregation of the Mission



**Christiana Olachi Oronsaye**  
Nigeria  
Society of St Vincent de Paul



**Ricardo Cruz Huamán**  
Peru  
Congregation of the Mission



**Gina Paredes**  
Dominican Republic  
Street Pastoral



**Ada Ferreira**  
Brazil  
Society of St Vincent de Paul



**Michael Raposa**  
USA  
St. Vincent de Paul CARES



**Rodolph Haddad**  
Lebanon  
Missionary Group of Charity



**Álvaro Tamblay Godoy**  
Chile  
Congregation of the Mission



**Tendai Kusembedzera**  
Zimbabwe  
Society of St Vincent de Paul



**Tomy Varghese**  
India  
Society of St Vincent de Paul



**Henri Matsinga**  
Rwanda  
Congregation of the Mission



**Rosa Tere Vicedo**  
Spain  
Daughters of Charity



**Justin Mumba**  
Tanzania  
Society of St Vincent de Paul



**Frander Vindas Hernández**  
Costa Rica  
Vincentian Vocational Pastoral

[Click here to learn more about each ambassador](#)

# FHA Conferences: Sharing knowledge and experiences



From its creation in 2017, the FHA envisioned the organization of conferences for the Vincentian Family as one of the crucial tools to reach its strategic goals, especially to connect Vincentians working across the broad spectrum of homelessness and to share best practice and research.

Therefore, in November 2018, the FHA convened the first gathering of the Vincentian Family on homelessness. More than 100 participants working with homeless, from 35 countries and 18 branches, gathered for a better understanding of the scope of the challenge as well as the opportunity for the Vincentian Family to address this global issue through effective collaboration and systemic change. On this occasion, we launched the “13 Houses Campaign” aiming at transforming the lives of 10,000 people in the 156 countries where the VF is present and active over 3 to 5 years.

FHA committed to foster those gatherings in future years while focusing on the different types of homelessness. In 2019, planning for a second conference centered on Refugees and Internally Displaced (IDPs) started. Then Covid-19 hit, with its multiple consequences on the homeless people themselves, on all nations and on our carefully planned agendas. The conference

scheduled for November 2020 is being postponed to Autumn 2021, with the possibility of opting for an online event that would allow broader participation with reduced risks and limited costs.

Either they take place in-person or develop as virtual meeting spaces, those events are important for the Vincentian Family. On the one hand, they give us the opportunity to meet one another and to learn about and discuss issues that are dear to our daily lives and our Vincentian hearts. On the other hand, in fidelity to our charism, they engage us in a process of reflection that prepares us to improve or increase our response to the needs of the street homeless, slum dwellers, refugees and internally displaced people. We then embrace our call to action by developing local actions and solutions without losing sight of the need for and importance of global collaboration and advocacy.

FHA is ready to rise to the challenge of a pos-Covid world that might require less face-to-face interactions and more virtual gatherings. The FHA Team shares the conviction of many Vincentians that growing together through knowledge, efficient sharing of ideas and work, local and global advocacy, and a wise use of our resources is the only way towards an end to homelessness, one person at a time.

# Creating lasting change

As Vincentians, we know that beyond addressing the urgent and immediate needs of homeless people, we have to address the root causes of this injustice if we want to achieve systemic change. That is why advocacy for structural changes has been part of the Famvin Homeless Alliance work since its creation in 2017. And our efforts have borne fruit in these three years.

The most remarkable one has been the Vincentian success in the United Nations. Early in 2020, the UN passed the first resolution on homelessness in a generation. This document enshrines for the first time a definition of homelessness and also asks members states to measure it and provide affordable housing. More importantly, the definition adopted is very close to the IGH framework:

*[...]homelessness is not merely a lack of physical housing, but is often interrelated with poverty, lack of productive employment and access to infrastructure, as well as other social issues that may constitute a loss of family, community and a sense of belonging, and, depending on national context, can be described as a condition where a person or household lacks habitable space, which may compromise their ability to enjoy social relations, and includes people living on the streets, other open spaces or in buildings not intended for human habitation; people living in temporary accommodation or shelters for the homeless, and, in accordance with national legislation, may include, among others, people living in severely inadequate accommodation without security of tenure and access to basic services”.*

This will help us to have a better understanding of the real dimension of homelessness worldwide, in order to set clear targets to end homelessness once and for all. Our long-term aim is to introduce homelessness in the next set of Sustainable Development Goals planned for 2030, making it a priority on the international agenda.

The advocacy efforts were led by the NGO Working Group to End Homelessness through the “Make us Count” campaign. This coalition, created by the Vincentian Family, brings together organisations from all over the world, including our partners Depaul International and the IGH. Thanks to their

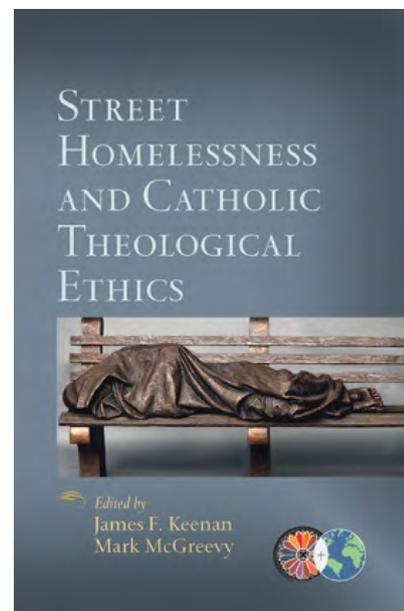
work, homelessness was the priority theme of the 58th Session of the Commission for Social Development. The Working Groups effort have continued despite the pandemic.

The FHA has also been active inside the Church to provide a better rooting of our daily work on our charisma and spirituality.

Members of the Famvin Homeless Alliance and broader Vincentian Family are helping to develop Catholic Social Teaching in the area of homelessness. They feature prominently as authors in *Street Homelessness and Catholic Theological Ethics*, a collection of papers published by Orbis Press. This book, alongside the *Journal of Vincentian Social Action* published by St John’s University, have been commended by the Vatican and will be used as a resource in developing Catholic Social Teaching in this area.

Spanning five continents, *Street Homelessness and Catholic Social Ethics* seeks to deepen contemporary understanding of, and approaches to, Catholic theological ethics and the global crisis of homelessness. Topics include global strategies for combating homelessness, local ethical responses, and advocacy for specific populations such as women, orphans, and veterans.

We hope to keep supporting Vincentian advocacy effort at a local and global scales in the next few years, from local parishes to the international stage, with our feet firmly grounded on our charisma and 400 years of work with the poorest of the poor.



# Looking at the future

*“The response to the pandemic is therefore dual. On the one hand, it is essential to find a cure for this small but terrible virus, which has brought the whole world to its knees. On the other, we must also cure a larger virus, that of social injustice, inequality of opportunity, marginalisation, and the lack of protection for the weakest.”*

Pope Francis, General Audience,  
19th of August 2020



Pope Francis’ words ring true for the Famvin Homeless Alliance; not only because they pick up on some of the most acute issues of today, but because they are highlighting the interconnectedness and complexity of our world. They illustrate that we must work in unison and across an extensive range of problems if we wish to address both the root causes and symptoms of this virus.

As we started to reflect on the path that lies ahead, the Famvin Homeless Alliance kept Pope Francis’ words in mind – they moved and inspired us. We thought about what we set out to do in the very beginning; and how current events across the world have influenced our focus and ambition. We also reflected on all the progress made thus far; on what worked well; on the brilliant efforts of the Vincentian Family; and on the activities that were less successful and need re-thinking.

The result is a vision that combines a focus on slum dwellers, refugees and internally displaced people with a wide-angle lens that explores a range of cross-cutting themes that disproportionately affect the poorest and most marginalised people in our world. This will enable the FHA and Vincentian Family to consider practical responses to the needs of slum dwellers and displaced people whilst being cognisant of how a range of issues – including climate change, human trafficking and gender inequality – exacerbate vulnerability and exclusion.

We are also keen to further strengthen efforts to develop systemic responses to homelessness. There is a deep-rooted understanding within the Vincentian Family that we cannot solve complex issues without looking at the underlying structures that drive and maintain poverty, injustice and social inequality. The FHA therefore seeks to develop strategies that will allow us to influence structural changes across all levels of government and advocate on behalf of those we are here to serve.

Finally, the last three years have shown us the enthusiasm, creativity and resilience of the many Vincentians that work on the ground. They go out to the poor and oftentimes have found inspiring ways to help more people, to bring innovation to the most unlikely environments, and continuously change lives for the better. We want to elevate that expertise at grassroots level and utilise their knowledge to inform new projects, best practice approaches and advocacy.

We are truly excited about the path that lies ahead and about the work that will be done in service of the poor. Let us join hands and walk together – united in Vincent and guided by our masters.

*“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up”*

Galatians 6:9



**Famvin Homeless Alliance**