

# FHA NEWSLETTER

**JUNE 2022-  
FAMVIN  
HOMELESS  
ALLIANCE  
NEWSLETTER**

*“Our vision is that everyone has a place to call home and a stake in their community”.*



# Editorial

During the FHA Conference from 7th to 9th June at the Provincial House of the Daughters of Charity we met with our hearts on 'fire' and let ourselves be overwhelmed by the unity and strength of the Vincentian family in Seville and online. The meeting brought together around 120 practitioners both online and in-person and saw the presence of experts from lived experience who shared their knowledge and testimonies to reflect on how we can better accompany those in need during their journeys to a safer place.

Together, we discussed the needs of people who are refugees, internally displaced and victims of human trafficking. We reflected on how their journeys do not end in their new places of residence; and on their desire to build a future, a desire that is often met with barriers that make it difficult to pursue a dream that unites us all: the right to a safe and dignified life.

The Conference also represented an opportunity for 'Vincentian' sharing to reflect on the union and collaboration within the Family itself and on how it can and should be strengthened to better respond to those in need worldwide.

We want to keep the teachings of the Conference with us and put them into practice through our actions. Every member of the Vincentian Family that took part in this event, inspired us to be better, and to go above and beyond for those we are here to serve.

We want to thank every one of you for all the work you do in serving those who live in situations of marginalisation and vulnerability and whose suffering we keep in our hearts, prayers and actions.

Yasmine Cajuste  
Project Development Manager



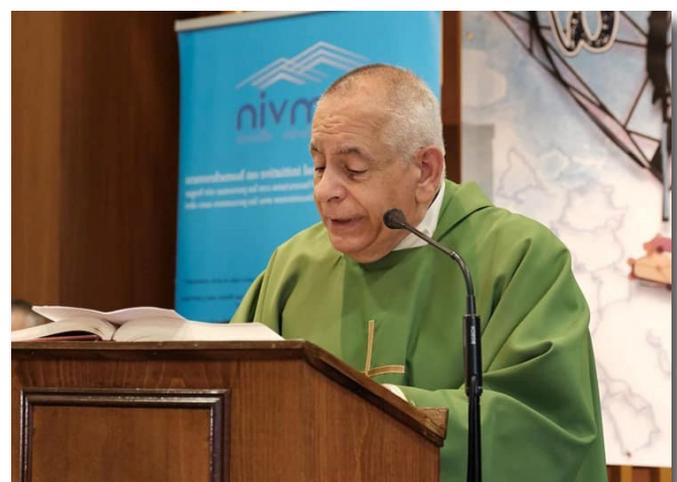
## FHA International Conference, 7th-9th June

How can the Vincentian Family help people who are refugees, internally displaced and victims of human trafficking? Through collaboration and action. These two themes permeated the 3-day FHA Conference.

In his opening homily, Msgr. Robert Vitillo (C.S.) spoke of the importance of addressing both spiritual needs and technical solutions to respond to the needs of refugees. We are therefore encouraged to open our eyes to the realities of suffering that perhaps appear distant to us but which are of vital importance since until the right to a dignified life is not guaranteed to everyone, then it is not guaranteed to anyone.

On Tuesday afternoon, we then focused on the triggers that cause displacement and refugee crises worldwide. In particular, Sr. Francely

Elizabeth Pérez (DC) told us how the Daughters of Charity reacted promptly by bringing aid and support to the families afflicted by the 2018 eruption of the Fuego Volcano in Guatemala.



Sr. Francely said: *'We saw many people looking for their husbands, children, wives, parents, relatives. It was common to see 5 to 10 coffins a day in the central park of Alotenango. Cries, screams, lost looks, long silences. Personally, most of the time I didn't know what to say. I was just accompanying them. Their memory still hits me. Their faces are still in my memory.'*

On the second day, we listened to Sr. Olivia Umoh (DC) speaking about the reality of Ghana and Nigeria and how 'Talitha Kum', a network of which the Daughters of Charity are part of, is tackling human trafficking through collaborative initiatives focused on prevention, protection and rehabilitation of survivors.

Following this and other testimonies, Fr. Fabio Baggio (C.S) invited us to reflect on the words of the Holy Father in his Encyclical 'Fratelli Tutti', as they become a tool of awareness and, even more important, of action:

the encounter with others is the only way to build a human society that goes beyond any borders.

On the third day, we then focused on the 'arrival', and as such on journeys that do not end but continue in the new countries of residence. We heard two testimonies from David Carroll (Depaul Ireland) and Sr Petra Jedličková (DC) talking about the needs of asylum seekers and refugees, in Ireland and Slovakia respectively. Hearing both testimonies helped us reflect on how the journeys of asylum seekers and refugees are full of fear and danger but also hope, and how we all share the same dream: the right to 'a safe' place to live and a dignified life.

These and other conversations animated the Conference, led us to reflect and share knowledge as Vincentians, brothers and sisters, and above all as human beings. We learnt that a 'safe place' is not yet guaranteed to everyone and inspired us to make sure that we work towards achieving this goal of safety by advocating for the rights of people whose voices are not yet heard.

## Stories of suffering and hope: a common journey

Silence. Tears. And then applause. The core meaning of a dangerous, tortuous journey, full of fear, but also hope for a better future is encapsulated in the embrace of the beneficiaries of the projects of the Daughters of Charity (DC) in Seville. The beneficiaries wanted to represent the journey of a refugee in all its facets; from the fear of not making it, to the agony of a mother having to choose between those who stay and those who leave, to the deaths at sea.

This and other moments represented the living heart of the Conference which has been an opportunity of exchange of knowledge between experts and experts from lived experience.

During the second day of the Conference, the participants had the opportunity to visit one of the 6 projects of the Daughters of Charity aimed at people who are homeless and refugees.

The visits opened with songs addressed to people in situations of vulnerability in the world and then moved on to sharing lived stories and listening to testimonies.

In the stories of people who are refugees, we felt the anger and tiredness of a lonely journey on a small boat that has to face a sea of perils; and where security is not always guaranteed when reaching land.

One of the beneficiaries showed us a photo of her on board of a boat for which she spent an exorbitant amount: 3,000 euros. At only 15 years of age, she had to do the journey alone, no family to offer comfort, or even a fleeting sense of security. Sadly, we heard so many of these stories; each so painful to hear and yet the pain is certainly relieved by the hopes and dreams of a better future: there are some who want to become lawyers; others are finishing high school; some want their families to come and join them so they can be, once again, united.



Every day we witnessed the warmth and strength of these women and men who accompanied us with their smiles, offering us tapas and cold drinks at every meal to face the hot temperatures of Seville. In fact, the guys from the El Pino project have embarked on a professional catering course that will help them move towards a better future. Many have recently arrived in Spain, but they already feel part of the Family, where sometimes they argue, but they support and help each other on this road paved with difficulties, but also paved with lots of happiness and hope. As Mark McGreevy (Depaul Group) said: *'Our work and this Conference take its meaning in the lives of the people we meet on the journey'*.



## What we bring home: 7 actions for the future

You might think that the Conference ended with the third day, but it is only then that much of the work begins. We are committed to bring the Vincentian charism to the world and we stand united in our service to the poor and to those whose voices are often forgotten. Based on the online and in-person discussions during the Conference, the Famvin Homeless Alliance therefore is going to take forward 7 actions.

1. We will facilitate the creation of a Vincentian network. Various testimonies, including those from Guatemala and Ukraine have shown us how, when united, we respond better to crises and consequently to the needs of those we help.

2. We will develop a local advocacy programme with a global view so we can ensure that the rights of those who are suffering are guaranteed. In this sense we are already working with the Institute of Global homelessness (IGH) at the United Nations to include homelessness in the Sustainable Development Goals and we will continue our work so that the right to a dignified life is guaranteed to all.

3. We will extend the mapping programme. If we are not aware of the projects or resources that are already available we risk getting lost in bubbles of isolation, destroying the spirit of collaboration and sharing that is inherent in the Vincentian charism.

4. We will develop a better crisis response through a strategic plan agreed with the leaders of the VFO and extended to the entire Vincentian Family. This action will allow coordination between the branches of the Vincentian Family and consequently a better response to the needs of people who are homeless, refugees or internally displaced.

5. We will develop toolkits and webinars on the teachings of the encyclicals of 'Fratelli tutti' and 'Laudato si' to be one human family in action and prayer.

6. We will invite and support you to develop a 13 Houses project that focus on people who are refugees, internally displaced or are victims of human trafficking.

7. Finally, we will continue to organize Conferences like this one. The next Conference will focus on the theme of slums dwellers and how we can respond to their needs.



We hope that this Conference has offered an opportunity to share knowledge, stories and testimonies and that it will encourage us to work towards creating better futures for all those we accompany on their journeys. Accompaniment means that we are with the refugees on the ground, listening to their stories, and showing them through genuine personal presence that they are not forgotten, even though they have no home. It is this accompaniment, this friendship, that leads to a compassionate and merciful recognition that the suffering of the refugee, the suffering of this friend, is our own. Accompaniment, dialogue, and listening are creative forces that inspire action, and lead to service.



Mark McGreevy, OBE, Depaul Group

## Be part of our global partnership with people experiencing homelessness!

Two ways you can be part our global partnership:

**Mapping Vincentian initiatives:** let us know about your work with people experiencing homelessness in your part of the world. The FHA is gathering information on existing initiatives from all branches of the Vincentian Family. Together we are stronger.

**Participate in the “13 Houses” Campaign:** are you aware of a recent initiative which empowers homeless people? Are you serving people experiencing internal displacement or seeking asylum? The 13 Houses Campaign is inclusive of all types of homelessness and considers any projects that provide perspectives for the future – even if they do not involve the construction of houses!

We want to see “13 Houses” projects in each one of the 160 countries where the Vincentian Family works!



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