

10,000 people housed through Vincentian Family global campaign to end homelessness



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

Editorial



On 14th October 2017 I stood on the steps of St Peters in Rome in front of over 10,000 members of the Vincentian Family from across the globe, to announce the establishment of the Famvin Homeless Alliance as a joint initiative of the global Vincentian Family. It had some very ambitious objectives and probably the most ambitious of all was the “13 Houses Campaign”. A plan to bring together all parts of the Vincentian family in order to house 10,000 homeless people over a six-year period starting in 2018.

Five year later we are delighted to report that the “13 Houses Campaign” now encompasses 103 different projects in 65 countries helping more than our target of 10,000 people find housing – with still one year more to run. We have many new countries in the pipeline and

I hope we can increase our reach to assist many more vulnerable people leading up to the Year of Jubilee in 2025.

I am particularly proud of the good work achieved by the Vincentian Family in areas where raising money or bringing people together has proven very difficult. For example, the Daughters of Charity in Burkina Faso and their work with displaced populations. Or in Guatemala, where Vincentians, in collaboration, have housed 35 families who lost their houses after the volcanic eruption there.

We could also point to Romania where the St. Vincent de Paul Society has been taking care of families whose children were constantly sick due to inadequate housing. Or the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia which has provided over 500 units of housing to the Campaign – an amazing achievement. I am also grateful to the sisters of Charity of Nazareth who have built houses under very difficult circumstances in places such as Nepal, Belize, and Botswana.

All these incredible projects show that the Vincentian charism of “action rather than words” is alive and growing across the world – as it has been for the last 400 years. It has been a real honour to be part of this incredible initiative and I think there is a lot more to come which is just as well given the size and scale of the problem.

The label of being “homeless” is particularly poignant given the story of nativity. It does not only apply to those we see sleeping on our streets but also encompasses hundreds of millions of refugees, internally displaced people and those living in slums and favelas across the world. Added together these different forms of homelessness point to the fact that one in eight people on this planet, about 1.4 billion people, suffer from a lack of safe and secure home.

At the root of homelessness is poverty in all its guises. For most it is material - literally having no money, no resources at all. But there are other poverties relating to health, mental health, addiction, relational issues, and family breakdown. We need to provide housing for sure, but also the support, care and love which can help people overcome the other issues to affect them.

Thank you to all of you who have supported our work and thank you especially to the dedicated team working for the Famvin Homeless Alliance who have made the impossible possible. Have a happy and blessed Christmas and may we renew our efforts in coming year.

Mark McGreevy OBE

Depaul Group CEO

What must be done? An answer that transformed 10,000 lives

By Anna Mosca

Imagine if Saint Vincent de Paul was with us today. What would he do in a world still torn by wars, where billions of people are looking for a home?

In the face of contemporary challenges, Saint Vincent de Paul might find solace in the unity of the Vincentian Family tirelessly at the service of poorest in many parts of the world. A Family that gave birth to a global Vincentian initiative in 2017, the Famvin Homeless Alliance, responding to the call of Jesus: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matt. 25:35).

The first conference in Rome in 2018 saw the participation of Vincentians coming together to share their knowledge about street homelessness. Inspired by the service of Saint Vincent de Paul and St Louise de Marillac, during times of war and famine and following the Vincentian question, we asked ourselves: "What must be done?". Thus, the 13 Houses Campaign was born, aimed at supporting all forms of homelessness worldwide.

Five years have passed since the first project 'Jerico Way' in the United States, whose first resident, Vincent, said, "The 13 Houses Project came at the right time. When they handed me the keys, I realized this was no dream. People were saying, we are here for you." To date, the Campaign counts 103 projects in 65 countries for a total of 2446 houses provided.

Certainly, the numbers speak about its development, but which steps gave shape to the Campaign? What stories and voices have built and woven its fabric?

Like a puzzle coming together with many pieces, today we are proud to say that thanks to the combined efforts of the Vincentian Family the 13 Houses Campaign has managed to help 10,000 people experiencing homelessness across continents. The journey to get here has undoubtedly been full of challenges but also of hope and joy in the shared service.

During the [Covid pandemic](#) in 2019, the Vincentian Family demonstrated its spirit of initiative, rethinking its services and extending aid (including food, financial support, and protective gear) to homeless individuals and frontline workers. This unity and collaboration also responded promptly to a range of other emergencies, such as the explosion in [Lebanon](#) (2020), the typhoon Odette in [Philippines](#) (2021), the war in [Tigray](#) (2020) and the invasion of [Ukraine](#) (2022).

The Vincentian Family showcased its adaptability and

understanding of various aspects of homelessness. In [Seville](#) in 2022, we particularly focused on the theme of people who are refugees, internally displaced and victims of human trafficking, recognizing that the journey does not conclude upon reaching a host country but requires ongoing support and companionship.

Then, in November 2022, on the 6th World Day of the Poor with Pope Francis's appeal, the Vincentian Family responded to his call, reaching people in need in more countries. The blessing of the '[Sheltering](#)' statue picturing a dove laying a blanket over a homeless person, on that same occasion is a gratifying encouragement for the impact of the 13 Houses Campaign to continue.



Today, 10,000 people helped is a number representing stories of success and voices that merge into a heart beating in unison. The Vincentian question of "What needs to be done?" persists and urges us to reflect and do more in a world where the right to a home is not yet universal. New challenges – including recent wars and climate change – may discourage us given their magnitude, but they also remind us of the need to respond with urgency and give us the strength to continue serving the poorest. [Pope Francis](#), during the seventh day of the Poor, warns us not to forget the real world and not to turn our face away from anyone in need.

We are determined to continue our mission of transforming the lives of more homeless people. We are aiming to reach them in all countries where there is Vincentian presence. With the collaboration of the Vincentian Family members who are active there, we know we can achieve it.

"A future we want: A home for all"

By Natalie Monteza

"A future we want: A home for all" was the title of the parallel event organized in New York by the [UN Working Group to End Homelessness](#) this past October 5th, to mark "[Urban October](#)" on the margins of the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly and the Sustainable Development Summit.

The goal of the FHA-sponsored event was to address the intersectionality of homelessness by reflecting on General Assembly Resolution 76/133 (2022) and the UN Secretary General's first ever report on Homelessness A/78/236, published this past September. On this occasion the WGEH wished to feature the intersectionality between poverty of women and homelessness.

Panelists included H.E. Ambassador Krzysztof Szczerski, Permanent Representative of the Mission of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations, Leilani Farha, Global Director of The Shift and Former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing Using, Francesca De Ferrari from the UN Habitat New York Office, and Natalie Monteza, Coordinator of the 13 Houses Campaign of the FHA.

All speakers shared their views on progress made by international organizations and some national governments to address homelessness. At the same time, calls were made for making the experience of homeless women and children more visible through both quantitative and qualitative data. All agreed on the need to press on towards a human rights approach and people-centered policies, as homelessness and its structural causes increase.

But the speakers who moved the audience more were the two lived-experience experts on homelessness from 13 Houses projects: Doris A. from Ghana, and Mildred M. from Guatemala. Their captivating testimonies put the spotlight on the main theme of the event, making tangible for those present the specificities of being homeless women.

"I come from a family of eight siblings, in our house we could not all go to school. Due to the economic situation of my family, my mother decided to send me to the house of an acquaintance who lived in a more developed city, where I worked for her even though I was a child". The fact of being a girl in a poor family was at the origin of a journey that took Doris to go through the excruciating experience of human trafficking as she sought a better life in Europe.



In the 13 Houses Campaign we have come across these and other examples showing that sometimes, a factor increasing the likelihood of being homeless or amplifying its effects is being a woman. This could be because of reduced opportunities to create a livelihood or access education, increased vulnerability during conflicts, or experiences of domestic violence. However, we have also met the many people in the Vincentian Family concerned with these situations, who decide not to be mere spectators, and are committed to walking side by side and finding solutions with those going through the hardships of homelessness. Many of the 103 projects of the Campaign have provided the necessary tailored attention to each individual case, bringing back hope and allowing people to aspire to a life free from homelessness.

To conclude, the panel discussion provided an opportunity for all stakeholders - persons experiencing homelessness, civil society, Member States, and other experts - to identify the progress that has been made and the challenges that remain, as the UN brings into focus the complex issue of homelessness.

The participation of the FHA in the event in New York shows our commitment to focus on the unique challenges faced by women and girls who seek housing and homeless services. While applauding the progress evidenced by the General Assembly Resolution and noted by the Secretary General, we call for a commitment and a plan to end homelessness, an egregious form of poverty and a violation of the human right to an adequate standard of living and the right to housing.



“Empowering Individuals & Communities: Vincentian Action in Slums” 2024 FHA’s International Conference

By Yasmine Cajuste



The next FHA Conference will take place on 29-31 January 2024 at Adamson University (Manila, Philippines) under the theme: “Empowering Individuals & Communities: Vincentian Action in Slums”.

Slum dwelling is one of the forms of homelessness within the framework of the Ruff Institute of Global Homelessness. Presently, around 1.1 billion individuals are living in slums or slum-like conditions, and it is expected that an additional 2 billion will join them in the next three decades (UN Statistic Division, 2023).

The conference will aim at exploring the current trends in global slum dwelling and looking at responses the Vincentian Family and other Catholic organizations are currently offering the communities living in slums around the world, from Madagascar to Brazil, from the Philippines to Costa Rica. Considering these experiences, we will explore what more can be done, acknowledging that our current responses might just be the beginning of a journey of transformation for them, ourselves, and our societies. Workshops and panels will challenge us to think differently, systemically, and more broadly and to dare follow in the footsteps of St Vincent today. We will face the challenges that can only be addressed through global and local collaboration, effective partnerships and creative initiatives that place the slum dwellers’ communities at the center. We will also listen to testimonies from slum dwellers and meet with them during the visit of one of the Vincentian projects in Quezon City, because our dreams need to flow from the vision and perspectives of the lived experts’ communities. By listening to them, we will hear God’s call and respond boldly.

The FHA’s conference will last three days, bringing together 70 Vincentians from 20 countries, but its fruits are to grow in the following months and years. We probably have some Vincentian presence in most slums in the world. The mission will be to slowly combine, with the help of many partners, current forms of assistance – and at times move away from them – and engage in housing initiatives and community development projects with entire communities.



Season's Greetings

May the joy of Christmas fill your hearts as you celebrate the birth of our Savior, who came to bring good news to the poor. Thank you for being part of the Vincentian Family and for your generous service to those in need. We are grateful for your collaboration and commitment to the 13 Houses Campaign, which has transformed the lives of thousands of homeless people around the world.

May you continue to grow in faith, hope, and love as you serve people experiencing homelessness.

Merry Christmas and best wishes for 2024.

