

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

Editorial

“
Hope
does not
disappoint,
because
God’s love
has been
poured into
our hearts
through the
Holy Spirit
that has
been given
to us.

Rom 5:5

Spes non confundit - Hope does not disappoint - is the title of the Papal Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025¹. These words come from a passage of Romans (5:5). The Papal Bull delves deep into the significance of the upcoming Holy Year, which has the tagline, “Pilgrims of Hope.” It has different sections: a word of hope; a journey of hope; signs of hope; appeals for hope; anchored in hope. In it, Pope Francis outlines the vision he expressed in 2022, explaining how the Jubilee “can greatly help to restore a climate of hope and confidence, as a sign of a new renaissance that we all perceive as urgent.”

This urgency is greatly felt in our day-to-day endeavors at the Famvin Homeless Alliance (FHA). We face many challenges in our mission to end homelessness. This past January, at FHA’s Conference in Manila on slum dwellers, we were reminded of the current projections pointing to an increase of people living in slums to a staggering 3 billion by 2050. If we add to that the hundreds of millions who are street dwellers, refugees, trafficked, and the increased number of people displaced due to increasing conflicts, the urgency to keep hope alive is evident.

How does the FHA see its participation in the Jubilee then? We have decided to be an active pilgrim of hope. In the papal bull, Pope Francis encourages us to be “tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardships of any kind”.

For the past seven years, the FHA has witnessed the Vincentian Family’s capacity to be dynamic bearers of hope. In three different Conferences, we have gathered Vincentians from around the world to learn from one another and international experts how we can do more in our work with people experiencing homelessness. In addition, just this past November 2023, we celebrated with joy the achievement of the 13 Houses Campaign’s goal of transforming the lives of more than 10,000 homeless people in five years.

Building on these accomplishments, the 13 Houses Campaign launched a new challenge for the Jubilee of 2025: we have requested and obtained permission to officially associate with the Pope’s call for “tangible signs of hope”. We have met with Vatican authorities to share our plan to care for and house more people in thirteen countries – with special attention to countries with ongoing conflicts – and in September we shall have more details about this initiative. United as Vincentians, and anchored in hope, we yearn to fulfill Pope Francis’s exhortation: “through our witness, may hope spread to all those who anxiously seek it”.

Natalie Monteza
13 Houses Campaign Coordinator

¹ The whole text of the Papal Bull of Indiction of the Holy Year can be found [here](#). If you wish to prepare for the Jubilee, you may download the [Iubilaeum25 application](#).

Empowering Individuals & Communities: Vincentian Family Action in Slums

Lessons Learned from Recent Conference Initiatives

In February of this year, the Famvin Homeless Alliance (FHA) gathered at Adamson University in Manila for a landmark conference which discussed how to transform the lives of those living in slums worldwide. Vincentian Family members, drawn from across the globe, are already making a significant impact on marginalized populations through empowerment and sustainable development but we spent time considering what more could be done collectively. Our work in slums aims to transcend mere charity, embodying a philosophy that fosters dignity, self-reliance, and communal solidarity. At the conference, we agreed to take collaborative action in several key areas to amplify our collective and individual impact.

Collaboration and Formation



One of the most exciting commitments from the conference was the enhancement of collaboration and formation within our Vincentian network. We plan to organize a series of conferences and webinars involving diverse countries to share knowledge and expertise on the complexities of slum dwelling. Promoting exchange visits among various Vincentian projects, such as those to the exemplary Akamasoa community, will help us share experiences and foster mutual learning, especially among our young leaders. As St. Vincent de Paul once said, “We should assist the poor in every way and do it both by ourselves and by enlisting the help of others” (SVP XII:77). We envision these exchanges as sparking innovative solutions, encouraging us to work together and strengthen the bonds within our Vincentian Family.

Practical Projects

Expanding practical projects emerged as a critical focus of our discussions. We are set to broaden the reach of the 13 Houses Campaign, initiating new projects to provide homes for those experiencing homelessness and bringing new branches into the fold. In a new, and ambitious move, we committed (via the FHA) to establishing a global scholarship fund aimed at educating 50 young slum dwellers from different communities worldwide, up to the graduate level. This initiative aims to break the cycle of poverty by equipping these individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to elevate their economic prospects, lift their families out of poverty, and inspire their communities.



Advocacy

Our conference underscored the need for a significant enhancement in our advocacy efforts. We plan to compile and amplify the compelling stories of slum dwellers, using these narratives to advocate for their rights and needs on influential international platforms such as the UN, EU, and national governments. As Blessed Frédéric Ozanam beautifully put it, “The knowledge of social well-being and reform is learned not from books nor from the public platform, but in climbing the stairs to the poor man’s garret, sitting by his bedside, feeling the same cold that pierces him, sharing the secret of his lonely heart and troubled mind.”



This aligns with our steadfast commitment to social justice. The FHA will also launch a unified advocacy campaign, connecting Vincentian branches globally in a powerful and coordinated push toward ending homelessness and improving living conditions in slums. Furthermore, we will lobby for the inclusion of specific indicators related to slum dwellers within relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequality).

Cross-Cutting Themes

Addressing cross-cutting themes in relation to slum dwelling became a central focus of our conference. The FHA will incorporate our discussions on the impact of climate change and displacement on slum dwellers into our initiatives. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by women in slum communities, we will also integrate a gender and women-focused theme within our strategic plan. This holistic approach ensures that all dimensions of poverty and marginalization are addressed.

Communication and Information

Effective communication and information sharing are crucial for our collective action. We plan to establish a robust network of Vincentians who are working with slum dwellers and maintain regular communication to enhance coordination and unity, and foster effective collaboration. This includes acknowledging and celebrating our successes and best practices, encouraging branches to work together on specific projects or campaigns related to homelessness and slum issues, and designating individuals or teams within each branch as ‘collaboration champions’ to further these aims.



Conclusion

The recent FHA conference highlights the transformative power of holistic, community-centered approaches to poverty alleviation. By focusing on enhanced collaboration, practical projects, robust advocacy, addressing cross-cutting themes, and improving communication, we can offer a compelling roadmap for sustainable change. The emphasis on community engagement and resilience building ensures that the benefits are profound and enduring. Despite the challenges, our Vincentian Family’s unwavering adaptability and commitment continue to make a significant impact, empowering individuals and communities to build brighter futures. In particular, the newly envisioned scholarship program stands as a beacon of hope, unlocking opportunities for young slum dwellers to transcend their circumstances and lift themselves and others out of poverty. As St. Vincent de Paul wisely noted, “Charity is the cement which binds communities to God and persons to one another.”

*Mark McGreevy, OBE
FHA Coordinator
Depaul Group President*

* For more information about the Conference, click [here](#).

The power of collaboration: an overview of an impactful Campaign

In 2024, the world witnessed a surge in conflicts and humanitarian emergencies, underscoring the need for collaborative efforts to address the plight of the most vulnerable. From the enduring strife between Israel and Palestine to the escalating violence in Sudan, the world is witnessing an increase in armed confrontations, exacerbating the suffering of millions. Amidst this turmoil, the Vincentian Family has been called more than ever to unite, combining resources and expertise to alleviate such suffering.

The COVID-19 pandemic already highlighted the importance of pooling resources. It opened our eyes to the interconnectedness of our globalized world, prompting unprecedented collaborative efforts in research to prevent further spread. Isolated, yet closer than ever, we were called to contribute to a common effort across the globe.

This era echoes the times of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac. Their humanitarian efforts during the Thirty Years' War in the 17th century laid the groundwork for the Vincentian legacy of solidarity.

Rooted in the same charism, the 13 Houses Campaign exemplifies the power of collaboration. This Vincentian Family initiative has seen approximately 25 branches working together with a singular mission: providing dignified housing and breaking the cycle of poverty through small businesses and education initiatives.

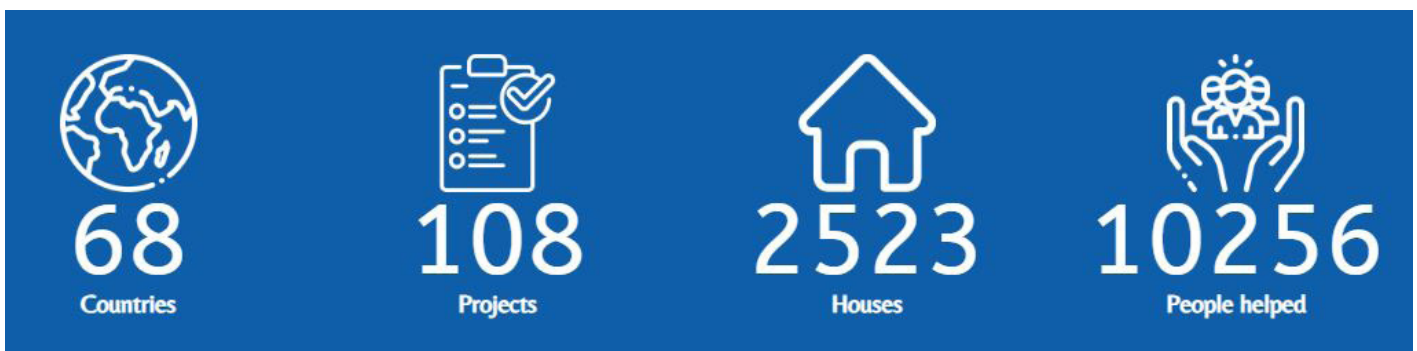
One house for one person experiencing homelessness in Little Rock (USA) in 2018 has, in five years, become thousands of homes in 68 countries, driven by a shared commitment to tackle homelessness on a global scale. The Campaign's foundation in a collective global effort makes it particularly effective. Vincentians have united across continents to provide shelter, aid, and hope to those experiencing homelessness. It has shown that when we pool resources and talents, we can achieve significant change in the lives of people experiencing poverty worldwide.

Collaboration isn't just about working together; it's about supporting one another through good and challenging times. The success of the 13 Houses Campaign is a result of the mutual respect shared among its participants. Together, a network of support extends far beyond physical shelter, offering dignity and a sense of belonging to those in need.

When Frédéric Ozanam founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, he envisioned a global network of charity. Vincentians are integral to this vision: collaborate with people of goodwill to combat poverty and injustice. If branches do not connect with each other or other charitable organizations, we miss out on essential resources to support homeless people. Together, we enhance our capacity to foster community engagement, and do better in our charitable services.

The collaboration of St. Vincent and St. Louise also fostered the formation of the Daughters of Charity, whose core values of humility and charity have become the basis of the legacy for generations of Vincentians. This collaborative spirit is alive in the 13 Houses Campaign, where over 10,000 people have been reached, and countless lives transformed.

Each project undertaken is a testament to the belief that by coming together, we can make a real difference in the lives of others. In a world often plagued by division, the story of the 13 Houses Campaign reminds us that when we stand united, we can achieve extraordinary things.





Inspired by Manuel Ginete’s words during the apostolic reflection at the FHA Conference, let us not allow the flame of charity to wane, but rather, let us extend a helping hand to others: “How was St. Vincent able to see the possibility of collaboration and creativity? I believe it has something to do with Vincent’s sense of what constitutes the most profound aspiration of human beings [...]. It is reaching out to others, extending beyond us and our concerns, being able to help without expecting anything in return”.

*Anna Mosca
FHA’s Program Officer*

Farewell, my friends!

In 2017, I was asked to join the Famvin Homeless Alliance – a newly created initiative by the Vincentian Family to mark the 400th anniversary of its charism by supporting established and emerging homelessness initiatives across the world.

It sounded exciting. Collaborate with people from across the globe to address homelessness in all its forms. Find opportunities to do more for those in need. Create sustainable pathways towards futures away from poverty for individuals, families, communities. Support Vincentians to make this happen.

Yes please. I was thrilled.

And then I immediately found myself quietly wondering (because who wants to advertise their ignorance?): What exactly is the Vincentian Family? And what are they doing all across the world? Just how are we going to get anyone on board with our vision?

I didn’t have to wait long to have my questions answered. At our inaugural Commission meeting in Chicago at the end of 2017, I met some of the most inspiring people I had ever come across. There was a buzz, a sense of excitement, an underlying current of certainty that we came together to do something utterly important; and an unspoken understanding that, of course, we could achieve what we set out to do.

I came to learn that the Vincentian Family was just that – a family. They share a profound spiritual connection wherever they are, and an unwavering commitment to their charism. They come together and laugh, and argue, and deeply care. They will fervently agree and passionately disagree; they will strengthen one another so each can walk their path confidently; they will find distant aunts and uncles and welcome them into their midst; and they will always make space for someone else around the table.

Most importantly though: they never cease to reflect and act on their social responsibility. They keep the legacy of the Vincentian charism and those that came before them alive in everything that they do and continuously ask what more must be done.

Learning about the Vincentian Family was a gift for me. And it helped me to understand that the Famvin Homeless Alliance was operating within a network of highly motivated, inspired and dedicated people – all we had to do was to create the foundations that were needed to support local Vincentians to act on the needs they were seeing. During this first Commission meeting, this is what happened. We discussed thoughts, pondered ideas, developed strategies; and it all culminated in dreaming up the 13 Houses Campaign which should become the flagship project of the Famvin Homeless Alliance.

Everything that followed happened in the spirit of enabling Vincentians to sustainably change the lives of people in their communities for the better. We convened conferences that aimed to educate, inspire and create new projects with a focus on collaboration and long-term impact; we started a mapping project to help us see where Vincentians worked to alleviate homelessness; we wrote newsletters, held webinars, and raised funds. We came together to make a difference and in turn enabled Vincentians across the world to change lives wherever they were – be it during the pandemic, after natural disasters, during conflict, or simply in their given environments after reflecting on what more they must do.



Leaving the Famvin Homeless Alliance after so many years is difficult. Not because I am not excited about what lies ahead; but because I know that any new job will have a hard time living up to the vision, the people, and the environment I have been a part of for these past years. I have had the privilege to become part of the Vincentian Family and to support the development of truly life-changing projects. I witnessed first-hand that the work we are doing cuts through the cycle of intergenerational poverty and provides perspectives for entire communities. I was blessed to meet the people who make this happen and who will continue their work and follow their calling for many years to come.

All of you are making this world better for those around you. And I am incredibly proud to call you my friends, colleagues, companions, mentors and distant family members who have inspired me. I will always wonder what more I can do. I will always carry the Vincentian charism with me. And I will be forever grateful that I had the absolute privilege to join you for this journey. Thank you.

Anja Bohnsack