

MANUAL FOR

*Systemic
Change*



International Commission of the Vincentian Family
to Promote Systemic Change

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2017

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to Promote Systemic Change**

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Introduction



The International Commission of the Vincentian Family to Promote Systemic Change presents this Manual you now have in your hands. It is an "Instruction Manual" to help you to implement Systemic Change. Often, a manual comes with pictures, not only to illustrate but also to aid in the understanding.

What we present in this little book, Manual for Systemic Change, will provide an understanding of a tool that since 2006 is available to the Vincentian Family for its work for and with the Poor.

Its main objective is to give an idea of the contents that generally meet most of the requirements of a method of working that is efficient and transformative to help people out of poverty and misery.

This Manual of Systemic Change has seventeen different themes that are closely inter-related. It conceptualizes each theme, systematizes the steps to follow, and expresses how the methodological steps flow from our Vincentian Spirituality and our Mission as collaborators of the Poor.

This Manual is a work in progress. The International Commission continues to develop each theme in meetings and seminars with participants.

We believe that this Manual may interest everyone, and may motivate practitioners to improve the application

of this methodology of Systemic Change and the knowledge of new paradigms for building a more just, humane and united world. It is not finished material. Suggestions from readers to improve the text are always welcome.

Giuseppe Turati – CM
Coordinator of the International Commission

In this manual we use the term “**Poor**” for the following reason:

“**Poor**” is a Gospel and Vincentian concept. We prefer this word to others – impoverished/marginalized, which seem to be sociological categories rather than theological. And we use “**Poor**” because in the Vincentian tradition “**Poor**” represents Jesus Christ. (Mt. 25:35)

International Commission to Promote Systemic Change



Right to left: **Teresa Kotturan** (*Sisters of Charity of Nazareth – SCN*); **James Claffey** (*Society of St Vincent de Paul – SSVF*); **Juan Pablo Jácome** (*Vincentian Marian Youth – VMY*); **Teresa Mueda** (*Dauhters of Charity – DC*); **Giuseppe Turati** (*Congregation of The Mission – CM*); **Rose de Lima Ramanankavana** (*International Association of Charities – AIC*); **Mizael Donizetti Poggioli** (*Congregation of The Mission – CM*).

In 2006, leaders of the International Vincentian Family created an International Commission to Promote Systemic Change, a methodology, in particular through projects, to help the Poor and oppressed to escape poverty and misery.

1. General objectives of the Commission

- a) Provide training to advisers and leaders of the Vincentian Family;

- b) Introduce and / or develop the understanding of systemic change as a way to promote sustainable development of the Poor;
- c) Study the materials already available;
- d) Share experiences already in progress;
- e) Disseminate strategies for Systemic Change in the Vincentian Family;
- f) Deepen Vincentian Spirituality.

2. Specific aspects of the Plan

- a) Equip leaders with the tools (knowledge, beliefs, skills) to help them carry out their responsibility for animation, direction, supervision and leadership in their local Vincentian Family;
- b) Provide opportunities for interregional exchange of experience and mutual training in the effort to deepen our Vincentian spirituality.

3. The content of the program

- a) Study the Vincentian Family: Branches, Nature, Mission, Spirituality;
- b) Conceptualization and systematization of the methodology of systemic change as a way to promote sustainable development of the Poor;
- c) The roles of advisor, counselor, guide and director;
- d) Key issues such as collaboration and networking.

The notion of Systemic Change

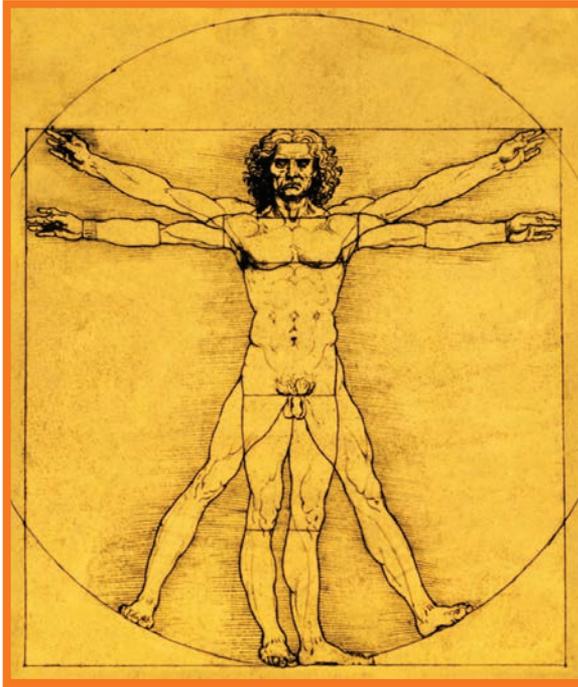
The basic concept of Systemic Change

A system is a whole, a unified composite of things that work together:

The universe



The human body



Society



Those who are committed to systemic change believe that "everything is connected to everything else."

A key distinction to keep in mind: The immediate assistance to the Poor and systemic change initiatives:



It is not one or the other, but both.



Both are imperatives.

Two keys:

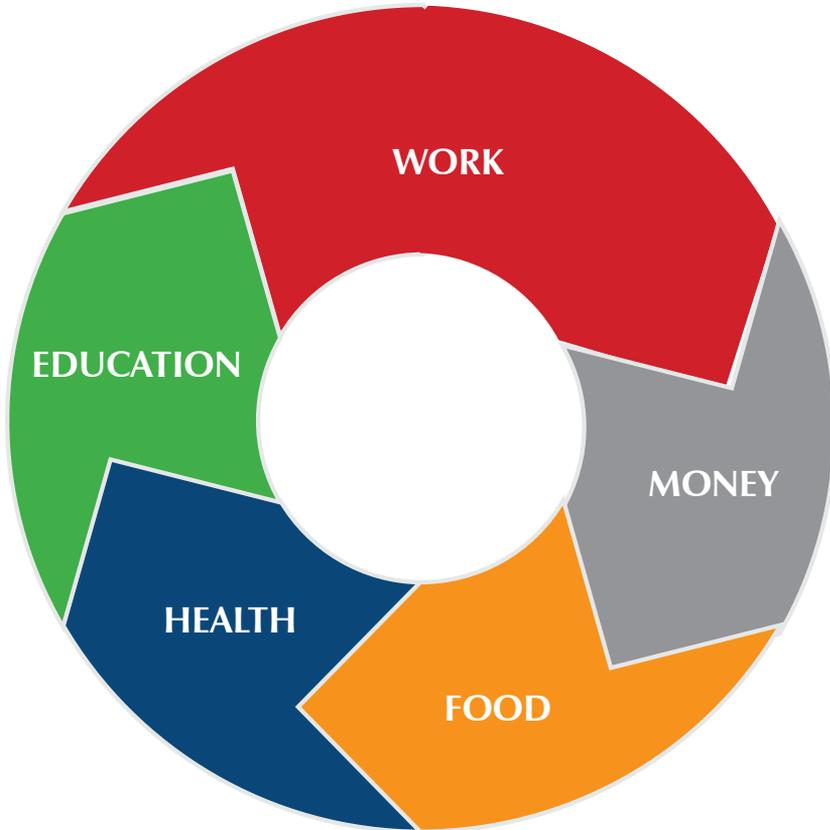
- a) Everything is connected to everything else ... nothing happens in isolation;
- b) Think systemically: see everything holistically, the composite of all parts that interact and affect each other, for better or worse.

Those who are committed to systemic change in the work for the Poor share that conviction. They claim that if you want to change the situation of the Poor, we must focus not only on a particular problem, such as providing food, important as it sometimes is.

Experience shows that quick solutions, even if they are useful for a while, are inadequate in the long term. Going beyond these solutions, you should consider the overall socio-economic situation of the Poor, and then must intervene so that the entire system will be modified.

If for example, I do not have a job I do not earn money. If I do not make money, I cannot buy food. If my child does not have enough food, he/she will suffer from malnutrition. If they suffer

malnutrition they cannot study well. If they do not study well, they will not graduate. If they do not graduate, they cannot get work. If they cannot work, they will not make money. We must break the system and change it.



3. Replicability



The initiative can be adapted to solve similar problems elsewhere. The underlying philosophy or spirituality of the initiative, employing strategies and methods that can be applied in different circumstances.

4. Extension



Specifically, this aspect means that the project has been extended in fact far beyond its initial context and has been implemented successfully

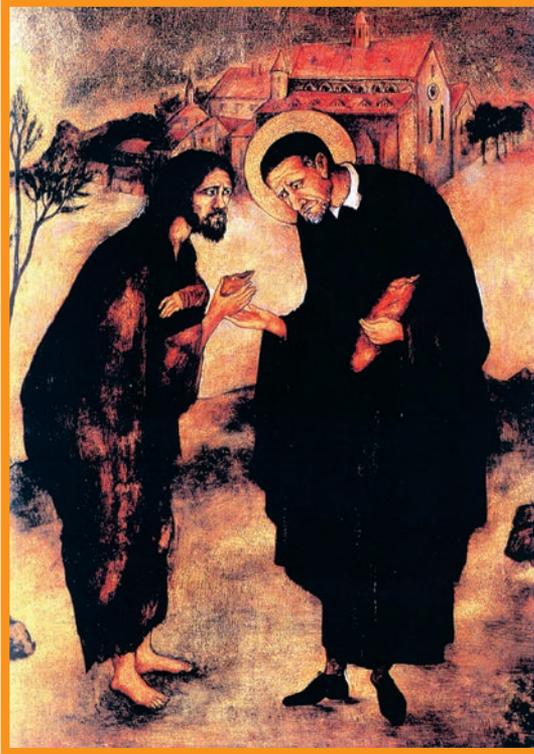
in other contexts in the country where it began, or internationally, either by those who started it or others who have adapted elements of the first initiatives.

5. Innovation



The initiative has been a significant social change by transforming traditional practices. The transformation has been achieved through the development of an idea can change the earlier social forms and managing their implementation.

Vincentian Spirituality and Systemic Change



Vincentian Spirituality is a spirituality that emerges from contact with the Poor. The two events of Folleville and Châtillon¹ marked the life of St. Vincent de Paul.

These two episodes will guide you from the beginning in the development of your faith journey. An experience of faith centered on following Jesus Christ Evangelizer and the Servant of the Poor.

The main point is the experience of Charity, manifested through:

- "Affective and effective love";
- Not disembodied spirituality, but intimately "directed to action";

¹ In the year 1617, in Folleville St. Vincent de Paul begins the popular missions among the poor peasants ; In Châtillon founded the Confraternity of Charity to serve the poor.

- "Love is creative love even to infinity";
- Prayer and action, reflection and service, faith and charity.

Systemic change helps us change the lives of the Poor (and therefore change our lives - evangelize and be evangelized). Systemic change is an important feature of the heritage of the Vincentian charism.



- a) It helps us see the world in a different way;
- b) It helps us to see the Poor in themselves, who they really are;
- c) It helps us see more closely the world of the Poor;
- d) It helps us to create a new way of thinking;
- e) It helps us to seek new paradigms in working with and for the Poor.

Three important dimensions necessary to be a servant full of fire for the Poor today



Mary in the Magnificat sings the beauty of a world in which God's fire broke out, turning it upside down, where:

- a) The last shall be first and the last first;
- b) The lowly will be exalted and the exalted humbled;
- c) Those who save their life lose it, but those who lose their life saving;
- d) Those who mourn will rejoice, those who laugh will cry;
- e) The powerful will be cast from their thrones, the lowly will be exalted;
- f) The hungry will be filled with goods, the rich will be sent away empty-handed.

The challenge for us, Vincentians, as servants of the Poor is this: to help those living in poverty, with both immediate needs and the promotion of justice and systemic change!

1. The fundamental dimension

The essence of bringing the Good News to the Poor is the ability to convey meaning and hope. The Vincentian Family members who develop this understanding should:



1. Articulate a deep rootedness in God, the Gospel and Vincentian charism;
2. Connect the soul of the Vincentian charism with the soul of a changing world;
3. To promote the faith of the members of the Vincentian Family and profoundly live;
4. Look to face the difficult reality and communicate to others the hope;
5. Recognize and exploit the potential of individuals within the Vincentian Family.

2. The relational dimension



Servants of the Poor filled with the Holy Spirit give high priority to the development of relational skills in themselves and in others. Servants of the Poor of the Vincentian Family who develop this relational dimension in their lives have the ability to:

1. Listen, inspire confidence and support family members;
2. Develop a team membership approach;
3. Communicate that everyone's thoughts matter;
4. Invite members to discuss issues that matter to them;
5. Facilitate ongoing formation in the Vincentian Family.

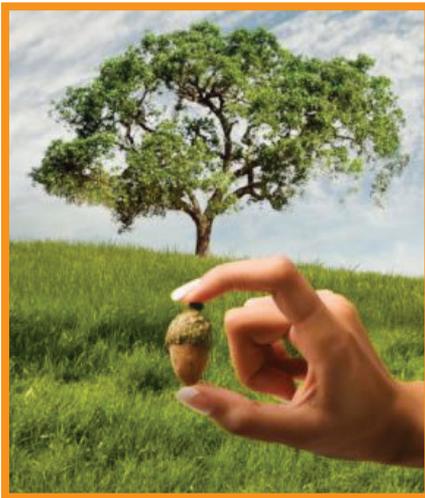
3. Organizational Dimension



Servants of the Poor filled with the Holy Spirit, have the ability to feel the climate of the group as a whole and forming it to be an organization that works harmoniously. Poor servants who develop this organizational dimension in their lives have the ability to:

1. Encourage the Vincentian Family program with new ideas such as systemic change;
2. Understand the organizational aspect of the Vincentian Family including legal and financial aspects;
3. Develop strategies for growth of the Vincentian Family;
4. Find and allocate resources effectively;

Ten Seeds of Systemic Change in the Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul



Within the context of his time, Vincent expressed many ideas related to a "systemic change". It is good for us to examine these seminal thoughts, since they help us to place a systemic change mentality in the spirituality of the Family of St. Vincent de Paul.

1. "Affective and effective love" → Changing social structures;
2. Evangelization "by word and work" → Integral evangelization; witness, preaching and human promotion;
3. "Spiritually and corporally" → Holistic service;
4. Seeing Christ in the face of the Poor → Love and high quality service;
5. "Chatillon" → Organization;
6. Contracts and rules → solid foundations as the basis for sustainability;
7. Simplicity → Transparency;

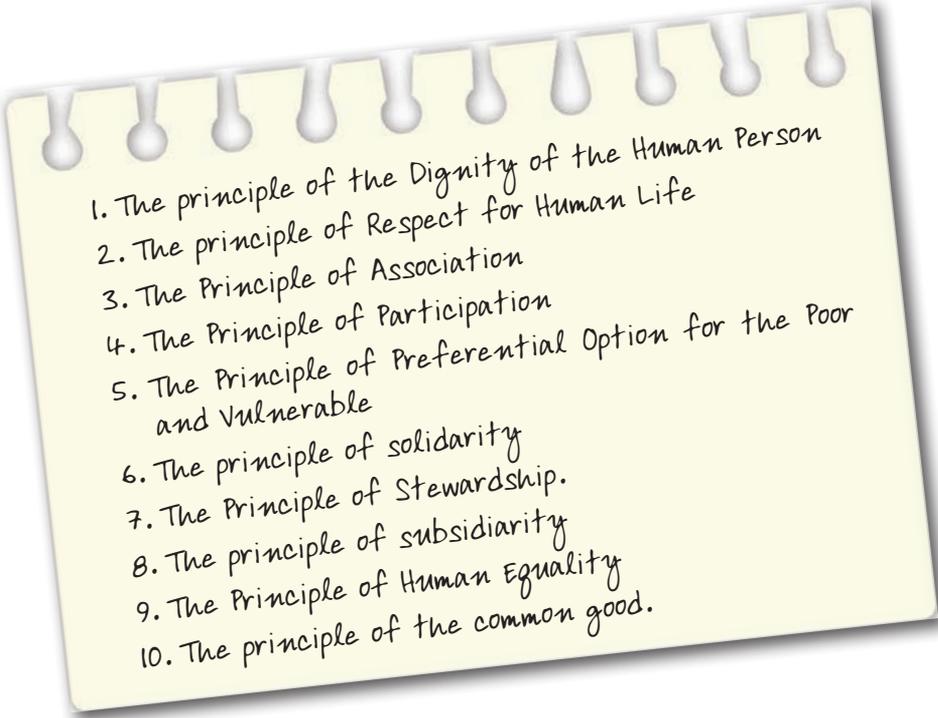


- 8. "Small schools" ➔ education and job training;
- 9. Collaboration among strata of society ➔ Networking;
- 10. His role at court ➔ The use of political action.



Ten fundamental principles in the Social Doctrine of the Church

The preferential option for the Poor the Church is born of Catholic social teaching. The Poor undoubtedly benefit to the extent that we and others are deeply rooted in "this essential part of the Catholic faith".

- 
1. The principle of the Dignity of the Human Person
 2. The principle of Respect for Human Life
 3. The Principle of Association
 4. The Principle of Participation
 5. The Principle of Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
 6. The principle of solidarity
 7. The Principle of Stewardship.
 8. The principle of subsidiarity
 9. The Principle of Human Equality
 10. The principle of the common good.



The importance of multiplying Agents



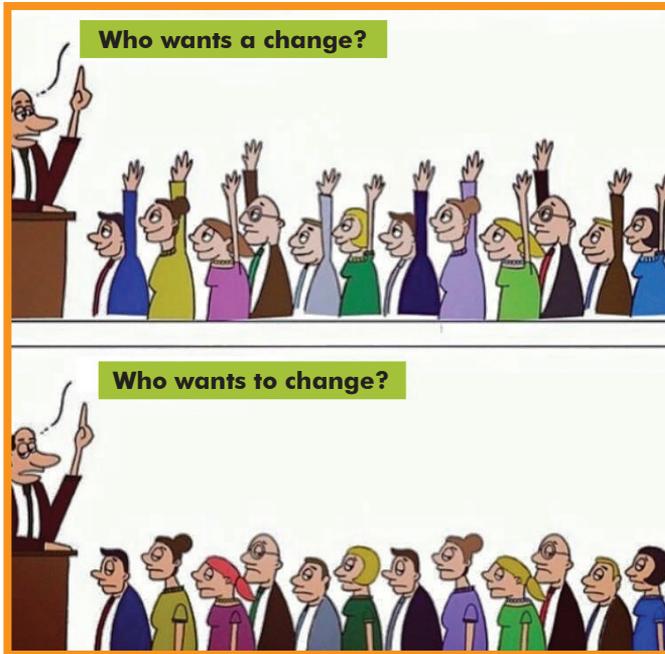
Multipliers have been crucial in the history of the Church. About the same time that Jesus began his public ministry, he sought the help of others to do so. He shared with them his way, truth, and life. And he sent them. The 12 apostles and the 72 disciples were the original "multipliers". A good multiplier should be:

1. Well-formed

St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac recognized the importance of training. So they not only sought multipliers, but also took huge amounts of time to train them.

2. Able to collaborate
Being a good multiplier nowadays requires a collaborative spirit. We do not serve alone. We serve in collaboration with others.
3. Aware of their gifts and limitations, and the gifts and limitations of others. To collaborate as multipliers begins with mutual recognition of the gifts.
4. Willing to persevere, despite disagreements, difficulties and failures. When multipliers come from different backgrounds, and different ages, collaboration can be uncomfortable, especially at first.
5. Committed to self-evaluation and able to accept the assessment of others with humility.
6. Able to learn from mistakes and seek pardon.
If we know our own weaknesses, it is much easier to forgive the faults of others and recognize that we and they inevitably make mistakes.
7. A good communicator
With good communication, we can be a dynamic force, an army of multipliers, so to speak, in the service of the Poor.

Collaborative and participatory work



Characteristics:

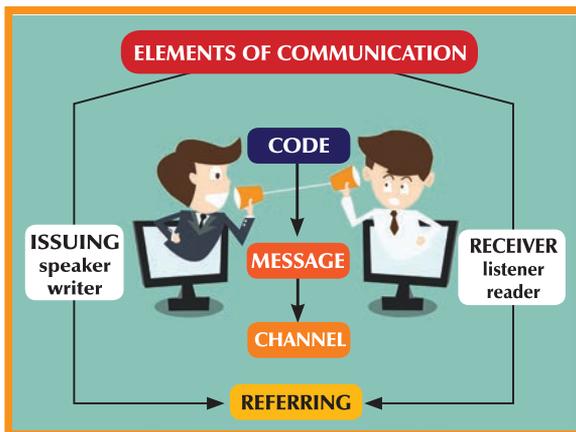


1. A good collaborative team is one whose members share a common goal. They start from what the group feels it needs, not what the leader sees they need. They are enriched with the skills and qualities of each of its members. Teamwork is not simply dividing the work among several.



2. A good collaborative team is one that moves at the speed and direction of the group, while taking into account the resistance to change. Everyone has their own pace for the movement, it's like swimming in a pool. Foster creativity, eliminating the phrase "you can not". They serve and understand the dreams and aspirations of the group and of individuals.

3. A good collaborative team is one that has good communication. As in the human body, all our senses are part of the whole of our being. The eyes can not see themselves. It is important to respect the rules of the group.



4. A good collaborative team is one that promotes group cohesion. Human beings have a strong need for belonging, for identity, and to the extent that we promote it the results will be better. Management of conflicts. Conflicts will always exist. What matters is how we handle them.

Successful strategies

Successful strategies are grouped into four categories

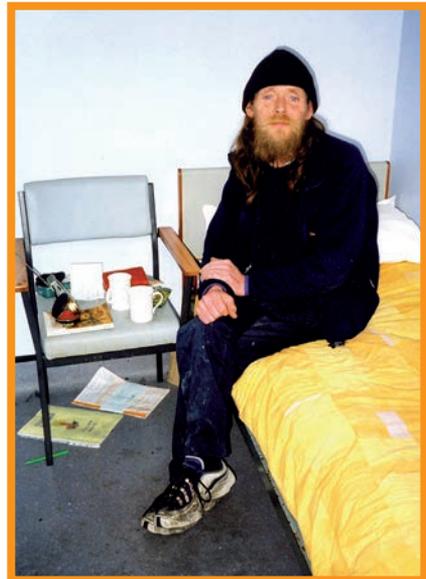


1. Strategies for the mission

These have to do with direction and motivation. For example, consider that poverty is only the result of circumstances, but is a product of unjust situations that can be changed. This strategy should focus our actions on breaking the cycle of poverty.

2. People-oriented strategies

- These are the strategies that focus on "the Poor" as those who are more able to change their own situations. For example, listen carefully to the needs and aspirations of the people themselves, creating an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect and promoting self-esteem among people.





3. Task-Oriented Strategies. These strategies focus on organization. For example, start with a serious analysis of the local reality. Ensure that tasks are oriented to this reality.



4. Strategies aimed at co-responsibility, networking and political activity - these strategies focus on participation and solidarity. For example, building a shared vision among the various interest groups: the Poor community, interested individuals, donors, churches, governments, the private sector, trade unions, the media, multinational organizations and networks.

Essential elements of Systemic Change (Essential Tools)

Eight essential elements and tools to succeed with the help of the method of Systemic Change:

1. The basic concept of systemic change (first tool)

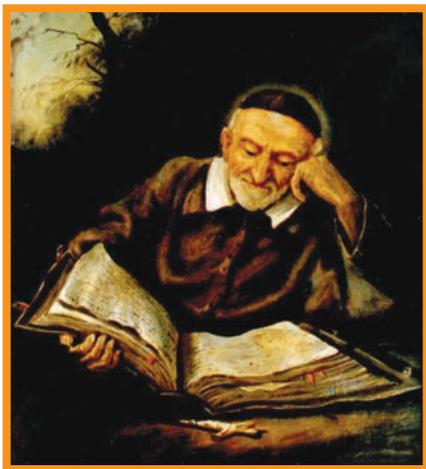
The first important point is to understand what is systemic change. Look at the system as a whole, a unified composition of things / parts that work together. Today scientists and sociologists focus on systems: A star, the human body, society. No one can understand a system simply by understanding only each of the parts.

2. Catholic Social Teaching (second tool)



For all Catholics and especially for us who are Vincentians, the Social Teaching is very important. We have in our Vincentian Family a person who is the precursor of the Social Doctrine of the Church: Frederic Ozanam.

3. The teaching of St. Vincent de Paul (third tool)

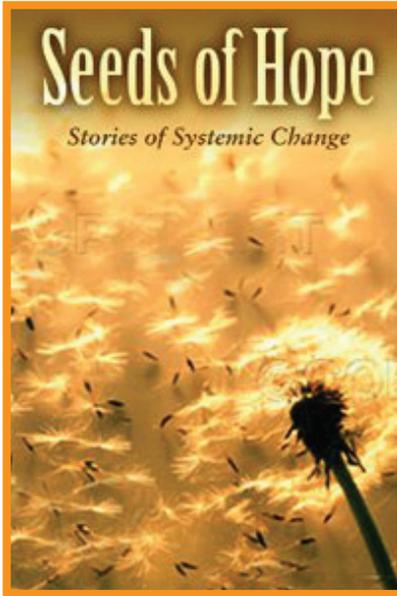


Always be attentive to the insights of Vincent de Paul.

We can-not be Vincent de Paul today, but we can perceive ideas he had and work to help the Poor out of poverty and misery.

4. Social Analysis - Reading the signs of the times (fourth tool)

Learning to see the signs of the times. Learning to read and interpret reality. The method “see, judge, act” is a great tool.



5. Successful Strategies (fifth tool)

The book *Seeds of Hope - Stories of Systemic Change* contains stories of successful systemic change. An analysis of these stories reveals specific strategies that made these initiatives successful.

6. Systemic change is a process (sixth tool)

Poverty is not inevitable, but the result of processes that cause poverty. Systemic Change is the contrary process.

7. Spirituality of systemic change (seventh tool)

The process of change must be based on a set of values and Christian beliefs such as Catholic social teaching and the Vincentian charism.

8. The Leadership of Vincent (eighth tool)



Vincent saw an urgent need and imagined a creative solution. It is very important to know not only Vincent de Paul as a saint of the seventeenth century, but also know Vincent de Paul as a leader and entrepreneur of innovative actions to help the Poor out of poverty and misery.

Five strategies to fight poverty



In the fight against poverty, the fundamental question is: "How to overcome poverty?". The best response is: "We help the Poor, listening to them, and working as quickly as possible and looking at the individual holistically".

Fighting poverty is a duty for all human beings. We must transform the hearts of people. We note five strategies to combat poverty directly. They all have one goal: to show in a concrete way, in everyday life, the love God has for us.

Strategy 1: Go to the Poor and listen



Gradually misery drowns people. The disenfranchised become accustomed to the worst situations and lose all interest in life. By listening to the Poor we can rekindle the fire that has been stifled by years of pain and despair. The contribution of the Poor themselves is the most important element. Listen to their needs and work with them.

Strategy 2: Do what we say we will do

It is important to think in concrete terms and tailor programs to the real conditions. That requires a simple language that everyone can understand. Projects should be designed together, considering all dimensions of the human person, body, heart and spirit, so that "all put their hands in the dough".

Strategy 3: Appeal to the Young



Despite their poverty, youth living on the street sometimes have extraordinary energy and enthusiasm. Young people are the seed from which will spring the future. It is essential to include them in all community projects. If they are entrusted with responsibility, gradually they develop the

ability to deal with specific problems. Education is the foundation of the future.

Strategy 4: Show a deep respect for the local culture

Each society is unique, with its own culture and its own shared wisdom. Programs should respect local customs. The family is the basic unit of any society. It is absolutely essential to create a link between one generation and the next.

Strategy 5: "The spirit makes the human being"

Material progress never entirely satisfies the craving of human hearts. Our spirits are restless while searching for meaning in life. The spark of God dwells in every human heart and moves to overcome the limited horizons of our daily life.

Social Impact



This topic deserves special mention. The social impact is one of the essential features of a systemic change, that is, should help change the overall situation of the lives of the beneficiaries. Projects using the methodology of systemic change should provide a long-term social impact.

This impact will only be achieved through the intervention of the different systems that interact in a given problem. In other words, this means that we can change the life of a person or family, and this is very good, but change the life of a person or a family, it is not understood as systemic change. For a project of systemic change it is necessary to change the reality as a whole in its environment.

For example, poverty understood as a multi-dimensional problem should be reduced not only for several isolated individuals.

The social impact of poverty affects the community, group or area, as a whole by introducing a new variable into the system, i.e. an initiative, a program, a different social element.



Social Impact attempts to break the isolation and bring together, in an organized and structured manner, the various organizations to great effect and impact.



As the saying goes, "To believe is essential but the attitude we bring makes all the difference." For an initiative to have social impact it is necessary for all aspects of the life of a particular community to be covered: sufficient food for all, commitment to the common good, mutual collaboration among community members, partnership engagement, search for human

dignity, clarity of Human Rights, education for global citizenship, sports and leisure, religious expression, gender, equality, respect for differences, search for justice, participatory decision-making, involvement in policy, equal relationship, respect for life, healthcare, decent work, shared solidarity, quality transportation, balanced family life.

This implies:

- a) Involve beneficiaries. The change must occur from organizing people through dialogue and "doing together";
- b) Communicate that change will flow from common, well-articulated values;
- c) Involve the various dimensions of the human person: the cultural, social, religious, economic, ecological, etc.
- d) Take into account all social, economic, and political systems in which the people are involved.

Change is possible...

The stories told in the book *Seeds of Hope - Stories of Systemic Change*, are stories of human suffering. But they are something more: they are stories about how, in many cases, have overcome unnecessary human suffering. All authors show that change is possible, you can create new and better structures and systems, and that people can live free from need and fear in circumstances that respects and recognizes their dignity. In that respect each story offers another sign of hope, another sign of this new world that is emerging slowly.



BEFORE

AFTER

In one of the most difficult times of his country, Václav Havel² wrote: “Either we have hope within us, or we don’t. Hope is a dimension of the soul, and it is not particularly dependent on some observation of the world... It is hope, above all, which gives us the strength to love and continually try new things”.

² Václav Havel (1936-2011), writer, intellectual and playwright, was the last president of Czechoslovakia and the first President of the Czech Republic. Strong advocate of nonviolent resistance (after having spent five years in prison for his convictions), has become an icon called Velvet Revolution in his country in 1989.



This truth grows in the Vincentian Family and spreads throughout the world, with a participatory and collaborative spirit, joining forces on the basis of our Christian faith and the charisma of St. Vincent de Paul, we can rather help the Poor out of poverty and misery. With determination and hope, values and well-made initiatives, we can make a difference in the lives of those who are "our lords and masters".



3. Furthermore, the world in which we live is a place where people of faith need to organize to denounce this unjust power equation.
4. People believe that in the face of the needy, the vulnerable, the smallest, is the image of God.



5. Your challenge in solidarity with the Poor, is embodied in the fight against various systemic injustices that exist today - in international finance, trade, debt, human rights and climate change.

The Vincentian Family participates in this process of transformation of unjust structures. Many branches of the Vincentian Family are working with the United Nations (UN) and other international organizations fighting against poverty and for the fundamental human rights of the Poor.

Fundraising

Fundraising is very important for the realization of a systemic change initiative. Monetary and non-monetary contributions are needed to perform desired and planned activities. Fundraising is so important that we can say that is a Ministry.

It is as spiritual as giving a sermon, spend time in prayer, visiting the sick, feeding the hungry...

Fundraising proclaims our vision, invites others to share our mission. Fundraising proclaims what we believe and invites others to participate in the work of the Kingdom of God. It is a call to conversion.





Vicente de Paul, Louise de Marillac and Frederick Ozanam would have said about fundraising: Do not be afraid; Be inventive; Get moving; Don't wait.



Therefore, when submitting a project based on our vision, our mission and values, three aspects are important:



- a) Act in strict accordance with ethical principles
- b) Maintain the highest level of integrity
- c) Act responsibly

Method for transforming an existing project

One might ask: Do I have to leave the project I'm engaged in and start all over again, using the methodology of systemic change? The answer is no! Gradually, you can transform an existing work into one that contains all the elements of systemic change.



If we move towards the transformation, the first step is to work with a new mindset and broaden our perspectives, in other words, we must begin by transforming ourselves. If we want to transform our work, we have to become servant-leaders following the example of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. Only then can we contribute to the transformation of others. You need to change your mind: "No problem can be solved with the same mentality that created it. We must learn to see the world differently", said Albert Einstein.

The beginning of the transformation process is the implementation of the Strategies for Systemic Change, identified and suggested by the International Commission.

Transformation happens in different stages. A starting point of the process is the analysis of the reality of the people involved. Start with a serious analysis of the local reality, flowing from concrete data and developing each project around that reality.

Consider poverty not as an inevitable result of circumstances, but as the product of unjust situations that can be modified, focusing on actions to break the cycle of poverty.





1. Establishment of the urgency to change

"Listen carefully to understand the needs and aspirations of the Poor, creating an atmosphere of respect and mutual trust and promoting self-esteem."

2. Creating a team guide

"Educate, train and offer spiritual formation to all participants in the project, forming multipliers."

3. Communicate the vision to achieve acceptance

"Building a shared vision with the various participants and decision makers."

4. Empower others to act on the vision

"To promote horizontal learning processes, forming effective multiplying agents and visionary leaders in the community."

5. Creating short-term goals

"Implement coherent strategies, starting modestly by delegating tasks and responsibilities and providing quality services respectful of the dignity of the person."

6. Do not waver

"Love is infinitely inventive" repeated Saint Vincent de Paul. Systemic change leads to a never ending process. The needs become more and more evident and call for new initiatives for more change."

7. Institutionalization of new methods, policies and strategies

"Systematize, institutionalize and evaluate the project and its realization, describing measurable indicators and results."



Conclusion

The material presented in this Manual is only an outline of a proposal to study, reflect and engage in the fight against poverty. It is based on the spirituality and the charism of St. Vincent de Paul. More information is found in the book "*Seeds of Hope - Stories of Systemic Change*".

Today more than ever, while working with the Poor, the idea of welfare-ism or paternalism should be discarded, along with the idea of the Poor as mere recipients of assistance, because the Poor must be the subjects of their own destiny and agents of their own development.

Many who work with and for the Poor believe that work should cover all dimensions of life and that changes must not only be individual, but must be communal, holistic and systemic.

The International Commission of the Vincentian Family to Promote Systemic Change has developed in recent years, international meetings with the participation of one or more countries where the branches of the Vincentian Family to deepen this study.

This Commission is composed of seven people from different countries and continents, with the help of one or more coordinators on each continent, it is always ready to meet the demands of the National Councils of the Vincentian Family to deepen the subject.

Some criteria for scheduling a workshop with members of the International Commission of the Vincentian Family to Promote Systemic Change are necessary:

1. The workshop is with several branches of the Vincentian Family. The Commission, to date, has not accepted meetings to advise only one branch;
2. Participants should have sufficient time to devote to the deepening of the methodology for their area;
3. Have a clear commitment to the Poor.

Those who want to implement the ideas and insights of Saint Vincent de Paul and want to deepen this methodology may contact the Coordinator of the Commission and, therefore, schedule a meeting to improve this new methodology and prophetic service to "our Lords and Masters".

Thank you.



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PRAYER FOR *Systemic Change*

We praise and thank you, Oh God,
Creator of the universe.
You've done all the right things and
He has given us the earth to cultivate.
Grant that we always use
Thankfully created things,
and share them generously with those in need.
Give us creativity in helping the poor
meet their basic human needs.
Open our minds and hearts
so we can be at your side and help them change
those structures that keep them in poverty.
Let us be brothers and sisters with them,
friends who walk with them in their struggle
for fundamental human rights.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

