



FHA NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2022
FAMVIN
HOMELESS
ALLIANCE
NEWSLETTER

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



As the year comes to an end, we at Famvin Homeless Alliance are reflecting on the accomplishments of the past year: from our conference, 'Accompanying the journey of a refugee', held in Seville in June, the Blessing of the statue, 'The Sheltering', by Pope Francis as part of the World Day of the Poor on 9th November, to our webinars on 'Collaboration in 13 Houses Projects' and 'Human Trafficking & Homelessness'.

The team is grateful for the continued support and enthusiasm of the Vincentian Family for our work, and it only encourages us more to find new creative ways to deliver our mission and support local Vincentian communities who journey with those experiencing homelessness.

Looking forward, 2023 will offer new ways of responding to homelessness, whilst continuing our journey into increasing the reach of the 13 Houses Campaign. Although we are excited to have transformed almost 9,000 lives through the 13 Houses Campaign, we are determined to ensure we are present in all 160 countries in which the Vincentian Family branches currently work.

Our increased focus is on the plight of refugees, internally displaced people & slum dwellers, with



13 Houses project in Mauritania

preparations underway for our 3rd International Conference in Manila, Philippines, in January 2024.

We will continue to concentrate on supporting local Vincentian advocacy efforts, and are more convinced than ever in the value of advocacy; only through combining proactive initiatives to give those experiencing homelessness a voice, along with providing the platform to express their needs and engage with all levels of society, will we be able to bear long-term fruits in preventing and addressing homelessness.

We are not alone in our local advocacy efforts - we will work closely with the Ruff Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH) and the Working Group to End Homelessness (WGEH) to create synergy and find local solutions to this global issue.

FHA is committed to, and at the service of, the entire Vincentian Family, and we rely on your incredible worldwide network to succeed in our work. We count on you to reach out and share what you are doing to address homelessness, and to express your needs so that we can tailor the support we can offer, all in the hope of together shaping a world without homelessness.

Please let us know what you do and how we can help you. Together, we are creating the building blocks to a world where everyone has a place to call home and a stake in their community.

Yasmine Cajuste
Project Development Manager, FHA

A Reflection from Ethiopia

How have the teachings of St Vincent de Paul helped the Vincentian Family in Ethiopia to cope during two years of war and to support those around them?

The call of a Daughter of Charity is to imitate Jesus in the spirit and charism of St. Vincent, hence, Vincentian values are Gospel values. Suffering was lived experience for our Lord and St. Vincent from birth to death but it did not stop them from accomplishing their mission. During the last two years, thousands of people have lived the passion of Christ in Ethiopia.

In our part, our life resembled the devastating experience of war in France in the 17th Century. Vincent encouraged his followers to identify with the suffering of the inhabitants through prayer and sacrifice in 1635, as he became a bridge between the poor and the resourceful to save lives that were at risk of perishing. The teachings of St. Vincent on the importance of prayer, imitation of Christ, trust in Divine Providence, on charity, networking and on surrendering our will to God were the driving forces. These helped us to live our call, to be daring in serving both victims and perpetrators without counting the cost, to build bridges of forgiveness and sow seeds of hope.

Vincent advised a young confrere appointed superior to ask the Son of God, “Lord, if you were in my place, how would you act on this occasion?” (CCD:XI:314). One of the many challenging incidents during the last two years was the imprisonment of our six sisters, simply because they come from a certain tribe. This reminded me of the injustice Vincent experienced when he was accused of theft though he was innocent. Moreover, our Vincentian values have helped us to see the person with the eyes of mercy and respect irrespective of his/her background, religion, ethnicity, political ideology and or even their contributions towards war; to respond to their needs with kindness, generosity and prayer. St. Vincent said, “Seek peace and follow after it.” (CCD:I:264). Our values have helped me in my leadership role, in courageously choosing peace and calling my sisters to be visible witnesses to Jesus who continues to suffer in those who lost everything, including their loved ones. It is with courage that we build a better future. The new perspective is to go beyond doing justice in order to heal the past and to build the future.

Thank you.

Sr. Hiwot Zewde DC

December 2022



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The Famvin Homelessness Alliance's Christmas Appeal for 2022 is raising funds to support the Vincentian Family's work in Ethiopia. To find out more please visit: <https://vfhomelessnessalliance.org/sheltering-hope-christ-mas-appeal/>

'Sheltering': an invitation to act together to end homelessness



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Dialogue, encounter, journey. Three words that embody the essence of Pope Francis' words at the General Audience in St. Peter's Square Rome, on 9th November, a few days before the World Day of the Poor.

The Vincentian Family had the opportunity to participate in the occasion and reflect on the words of His Holiness who invited us to have '*open hearts; not closed, hard hearts*', to encounter each other and broaden our horizons, to not be stopped by our fears, but go beyond to feel '*one heart and one soul*'. (General Audience, 9th November 2022).

The Sheltering statue, created by Timothy Schmalz, was blessed by Pope Francis and donated to the Vincentian Family on the same day.

For the Famvin Homeless Alliance, it represents an invitation '*to do something and not to remain indifferent in front of the plight of people experiencing homelessness*' (Natalie Monteza, 13 Houses Campaign Coordinator).

Just like the dove on the statue, a symbol of the Holy Spirit, pulling the blanket over the homeless person, we are called in our mission to serve the poor, as Father Bob Maloney reminded us in [his meditation](#), quoting the words of Saint Vincent: '*In this vocation of ours, we are very much in conformity with Our Lord Jesus Christ ... If we ask Our Lord, "What did you come to*

do on earth?", (Jesus would respond), "*To assist the poor*", "*Anything else?*", "*To assist the poor*" (CCD: XI:98).

The statue also represents an invitation to collaborate and pool our strengths as a Vincentian Family to better respond to the needs of people experiencing homelessness.

There are numerous testimonies of 13 Houses projects that show the strength of Vincentian collaboration within and beyond the Family, such as the response to the eruption of the Fuego Volcano in 2018 in [Guatemala](#), the disaster relief work in [Haiti](#), or the construction of houses for families living in poverty in the [Dominican Republic](#).

As Sr Carol Keehan, FHA Commission member, pointed out, the statue represents '*an opportunity, after COVID, for the Vincentian Family to be together, to strengthen our force as a Family*'.

Guided by Pope Francis' words, we hope to see more Vincentian projects in new countries. A copy of the statue, a symbol of the Vincentian Family's shared mission to the poor, can be commissioned by your branch.

If you would like more information, please email Yasmine Cajuste, homeless@famvin.org.

In the spirit of Advent, we recall Pope Francis' words: '*So today is a good moment to ask ourselves: what weighs on my heart? What weighs on my spirit? ... And regarding the burdens that weigh on the shoulders of our brothers and sisters, am I aware of them or indifferent to them? These are good questions to ask ourselves because they help guard our hearts against apathy.*' (Angelus, 28th November 2021).

We hope these questions can help us to move away from apathy and towards taking action, working together to not only build houses, but also to strengthen our communities to ensure no one experiences homelessness again.

Seville Conference: committed with new approaches to end homelessness

On 7-9 June 2022, the FHA conference, 'Accompanying the Journey of a Refugee', was held in Seville, Spain. The meeting hosted 120 attendees from across the various branches of the Vincentian Family. The Conference was a resounding success, and everyone left full of enthusiasm and desire to take action.

One attendee, Sr. Olivia, Daughter of Charity in Ghana, said she and her team members planned *"to engage in public education on sensitizing around homelessness and the factors that render people vulnerable to it. Accordingly, we organized awareness campaigns around World Homeless Day on 10th October 2022."*

For Sr. Francely, from Guatemala, what she heard during the conference led to a reflection on the work they are currently doing: *"the service of the 'homeless kitchen' that we have in our house could take a turn if we do good discernment since the place is strategic for El Paso, for many displaced people from remote villages in Guatemala."*

Following the Conference in Seville, the FHA team found inspiration to continue investing in Vincentian networks, global mapping, and local advocacy with a global view to ensure that the rights of those who are suffering are guaranteed. Capitalizing on its success, the FHA team is proud to announce the next conference will be in the Philippines with a

thematic focus on slums dwellers and how we can respond to their needs.

Whilst working with our 13 Houses projects, it was clear that the Conference's topic is relevant and an important area of their work.

In the words of some of you:

"People who are refugees, IDPs and victims of human trafficking are often vulnerable to homelessness which is a major concern of the Vincentian Family".

"It is necessary to talk about this because some members of FAMVIN are still unaware of the specific work that the Family is doing with respect to refugees and displaced persons".

With this quote of Saint Vincent in mind:

"How I wish that the members of the Mission who are together would do everything in conjunction with one another! This is how friends act, and how much more so should two brothers who live together"(Vincent de Paul, V:333), we wish everyone a restful Christmas and a warm welcome to the new year with continued enthusiasm to work together to end homelessness across the world.



Working group in Seville

The 13 Houses Campaign: A Celebration of the Vincentian Charism

It is utterly inspiring to think that after 400 years, the charism of a single man who had a dream of ending homelessness is kept alive today by the power of your prayers and actions at the service of the poorest of the poor worldwide.

By reading your stories, we can hear your dedication to serving the most in need, the strength in not giving up even when all seems lost, your faith in God and the perseverance to keep going despite terrifying events such as natural disasters, wars, famines and persecutions.

We feel honoured to be part of one Family, and to celebrate the 4th anniversary of the 13 Houses Campaign, we remember when we gathered in Rome in 2018 and chose to draw inspiration from the mission of St Vincent and St Louise at the service of people experiencing homelessness.

Since then, the 13 Houses Campaign counts 93 projects in 60 countries, with a total of 8,697 people helped. Can you imagine how many small steps we walked together to be able to talk about these numbers, behind which are the stories of thousands of women, men and children? We are thrilled to announce that we are approaching our target of transforming the lives of 10,000 people worldwide, guaranteeing the right to adequate housing and a dignified life.

We would especially like to thank you because, despite all the difficulties, you share with us a precious gift: the stories of the people you are helping through systemic change projects. To capture these moments of life, we created [this video](#) that shows all the countries and projects in which the campaign is present.

In particular, we are proud to welcome a new 13 Houses project, 'Houses for poor families' in Vietnam, which joined the campaign following the Call for Proposals launched in August.



13 Houses project in Vietnam

Fr Peter Pham Minh Trieu, CM said: *"On behalf of my Confreres, thank you very much for your generosity and support of our project. Hopefully, with your prayers and encouragement, our project will complete soon and be useful for our mission. God bless".*

Other countries such as Central African Republic, Lesotho and Liberia expressed interest in joining the campaign and we hope to see new projects there soon. Thankful for this response, we decided to extend the Call for Proposals **up to 28th February 2023**, in the hope that more countries will join us.

Guided by the spirit of Advent, we want to share with you Pope's Francis words: *'Advent invites us to a commitment to vigilance, looking beyond ourselves, expanding our mind and heart in order to open ourselves up to the needs of people, of brothers and sisters, and to the desire for a new world. It is the desire of many people tormented by hunger, by injustice and by war (...) This is a favourable time to open our hearts, to ask ourselves concrete questions about how and for whom we expend our lives.'* (Angelus, 2nd December 2018).

We, therefore, invite you to share [this call](#), to reach out to other Vincentians, to help people experiencing homelessness, like St Vincent did, 400 years ago. Let's transform this dream into reality, together we can truly transform people's lives.



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