

"YOU DID IT TO ME"

*Projects and initiatives
of the Focolare Movement
worldwide*

2024
Communion
in Action



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“You did it to me”

When, about a year ago, we decided to dedicate the 2024 Communion in Action Report to the activities of the Focolare Movement around the world, Jesus’ words, *“Just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me”* (see Mt 25:40), immediately struck me as the best description of the origin and aim of everything we will find in these pages.

I asked myself: who are our “least of these brothers and sisters” today, as the Gospel defines them? They are migrants in search of a land and a job; they are the poor people and the children who have no educational opportunities; they are the sick who need care; they are prisoners who struggle with loneliness and need rehabilitation; they are the nations that suffer the consequences of war. The Focolare Movement seeks to listen to these cries and many others and roll up its sleeves to transform them into opportunities for revival and hope through projects and initiatives.

This Communion in Action Report bears witness to a wide range of initiatives that connect people and institutions, driven by a single desire: to be close to every brother and sister who passes next to us, offering them the chance of a dignified life and the prospect of a better future.

My greatest hope is that these gestures of fraternity, linked together with those of many other organisations, may contribute to peace in these troubled times, which today more than ever requires closeness, dialogue and communion.

Margaret Karram
President of the Focolare Movement

Focolare Movement



Who we are

Year of origin: 1943

Diffusion: 150 Paesi

Focolares and communities in the world: 1,700

Fields of action: spirituality, all-encompassing dialogue and fraternity, culture and education, solidarity and international cooperation, economy and work, art, communication and media, environment, health and sustainable development.

Ongoing projects: United World Project, Humanitarian emergencies (aid in support of the populations of the Middle East – Goma – Ukraine), Focolare Eco plan, Mediterranean of fraternity, Artisans of peace.



A message to be lived

“As I was listening to you speak, two images came to mind: the desert and the forest. I thought: these people, all of you, take a desert and transform it into a forest. They go wherever a desert is, where there is no hope, and do things that make this desert become a forest. A forest is full of trees, it is full of green, but too disorganized, but such is life! And changing from desert to forest is a beautiful job that you do. You transform deserts into forests!”

Pope Francis
during his visit to the “Earth Village”,
Rome, Villa Borghese,
24 April 2016

“We are a people on the move. This does not set us apart but unites us to humanity like the yeast in a mass of dough, which causes it to rise. The year of the Lord’s grace, reflected in the current Jubilee, has this fermentation within it. In a divided and troubled world, the Holy Spirit teaches us to walk together in unity. The earth will rest, justice will prevail, the poor will rejoice and peace will return, once we no longer act as predators but as pilgrims.”

Pope Leo
to the Jubilee of the Ecclesial Movements,
Saint Peter’s Square,
7 June 2025

One city is not enough

If you want to win over a city to the love of Christ, if you want to transform a town into the kingdom of God, first make your plans. Gather round you friends who share your feelings. Unite yourself with them in the name of Christ and ask them to put God before anything else.

Then make a pact with them: promise one another constant and perpetual love, so that the Conqueror of the world may be always among you and be your leader; so that when your ego has been destroyed in love, your every step may be sustained, your every tear be dried, by the Mother of Beautiful Love.

Then, assess the needs of the city.

... Then look for the poorest people, the destitute, the forsaken, the orphans, the prisoners.

Without pausing your action, run with your friends to visit Christ in them, to comfort them, to reveal to them that the love of God is close to them and watches over them.



If someone is hungry, take them food, if naked, take them clothing. If you have neither clothes nor food [to offer people], ask for these from the Eternal Father with faith, because they are necessary for his Son, Christ, whom you wish to serve in every human person. And he will hear you.

Loaded with all these goods go through the streets, go up into attics and down into cellars, seek out Christ in public and private places, at the stations, along the railways, in the slums, and caress him above all with your smile.

Then promise him eternal love so that the places you are unable to go may be reached by your prayers and your sufferings, united to the Sacrifice of the altar. Leave no one feeling alone, and do not be limited in your promises, because you are going in the name of the Almighty.

While you are gladdening the Lord in your brothers and sisters, God will concern himself with filling you and your friends with heavenly gifts. Share these with one another, so that the light may not grow dim and love go out. If your action is decisive and your speech filled with wisdom, many will follow you. Divide these people into groups so that with them you may leaven the city that you wish to “mine” with your love. Keep going. If others, having got to know your life and having seen with their own eyes the gifts you have, ask you to talk, then speak, but let the essence of your speech be the things you have learned from life.

... Having consoled, helped, enlightened, and made happy those who were the social outcasts, you have laid the foundations to build the new city. Then gather your friends together and repeat the beatitudes to them, so that they may never lose the spirit of Christ and of his preferential love. After that, look further afield and tell everyone that every neighbour, rich or poor, beautiful or ugly, gifted or not, is Christ who passes by.

... Each of you weep with those who weep, rejoice with those who rejoice, constantly share sufferings and joys with every sacrifice, without ever ceasing. Alternate your action with the deepest prayer And if the struggle costs, know that there lies the secret of success, and that he who urges you on has paid with his blood. Forgive and pray for those who think ill of you, for if you do not forgive, you will not find mercy

Do this for a city until you reach victory, to the point, that is, that good overcomes evil and Christ through us can repeat: “I have conquered the world” (*Jn 16:33*). But with a God who visits you every morning, if you wish, one city is not enough. He is the one who has made the stars, who guides the destiny of all time.

Come to an agreement with him, and aim further: at your country, at everyone’s country, at the world. Let your every breath be for this; for this your every action; for this, your resting and your moving ahead.

Having reached the next life, you will see what has most value, and you will find a reward proportionate to your love. Act in such a way that in that hour you need not regret having loved too little.

Chiara Lubich
Foundress of the Focolare Movement

“Assess the needs of the city”

Among the opening words of “*A City is Not Enough*” is an invitation to look around us, to immerse ourselves deeply in the reality in which we find ourselves and to face it. Not an angelic ideal made up of theories, but a practical message embodied in time and history: this is what emerges from those few, dense sentences, which constitute what we could define as the social manifesto of Chiara Lubich. We have chosen it as

a guide for the 2024 Communion in Action of the Focolare Movement, seizing the momentum – which has been resonating for generations – to broaden our vision and our action beyond our comfort zone, so that we will not regret having loved too little.

These pages will take us across five continents, guided by a desire: to respond to the needs of

brothers and sisters with their different faces and various colours, and inspired by a common purpose. To recognise in everyone a cry of abandonment, and to fill this enormous emptiness starting from an explicitly declared agreement: Gospel-based love as the foundation of every action.

And so, our responding to the needs, the cries and the emptiness can be expressed by all the works of mercy: satisfying material, spiritual and educational hunger; clothing people with dignity by offering them work and education; teaching with words and by example; advising...

These needy brothers and sisters are families, children, young people, prisoners, homeless people, victims of addiction, refugees, persecuted people, those suffering from political, climatic and social instability. They are the protagonists of this journey, together with those who have made the dream of a different world their own: the dream of a God-man who died on the cross two thousand years ago, “Father, may they all be one”. This dream was taken up by Chiara Lubich, a spiritual and charismatic figure of the 20th century who inspired people everywhere: to live for universal fraternity, so that “all may be one” (*Jn 17:21*), and this is also the goal and way of life of the Focolare Movement’s activities around the world.



In this 2024 Communion in Action Report, we want to give voice to the activities and practical achievements that have come to life from its charism, which bear its imprint and DNA,

in collaboration with many other creative entities in society, those that do not give in to an established order of injustice and prevarication.

This is not an exhaustive list, but rather a journey in which we explore some meaningful stories, listen to the protagonists themselves describing the impact on their lives and the world around them, and connect with an invisible but real thread the initiatives that take the form of schools, soup kitchens,

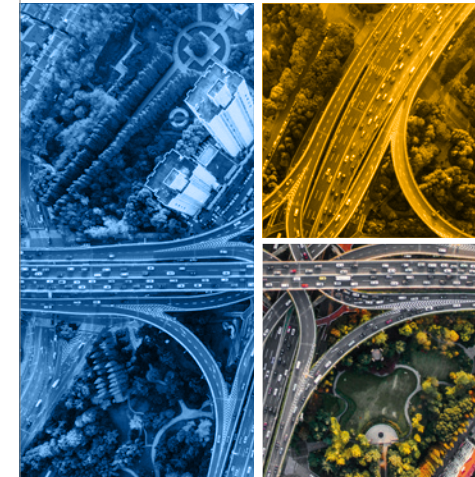
healthcare support, professional training courses, an oasis where people can meet, cultural production, green activities and social transformation. Some are more recent; others already have twenty or thirty years of history behind them.

These are projects, achievements and structures that have often been able to reinvent themselves. They were established with a specific purpose at the time the Focolare Movement was founded in a certain country, they have faced challenges

of sustainability, demographic changes and new needs. They are examples of creative and dynamic faithfulness, to use an expression of Jesús Morán, philosopher and theologian, co-president of the Focolare Movement, in which these projects, faithful to their charismatic inspiration, have not been afraid to change their forms and ways of expression.

It is not simply a collection of data, but a living narrative. A report that measures not only numbers but also looks at the change generated in people and in contexts. An invitation to let ourselves get involved, to go ahead together, so that fraternity can be translated into activities that transform the social fabric.

We hope you enjoy it!



How to read the 2024 Communion in Action Report

A Communion in Action Report is an instrument – in the tradition of the Social Reports of non-governmental and non-profit organisations – which aims to express a style inspired by the Gospel, an invitation to live love through *facts, not words*, and which promotes relationships of reciprocity, of communion. This report is part of a roadmap that began in 2021 with the General Assembly of the Focolare Movement. With the desire to make the results of the communion of goods more visible and shared, it led to a first **publication in 2022** of the activities carried out in the previous two years (2020-2021) and especially related to the International Centre. In 2023, ***In Dialogue, the Communion in Action Report for the year 2022***, was published, with a selection of the many actions that have contributed to healing divisions and polarisation through dialogue, the lifestyle of people who live the spirituality of unity.

And this year? To prepare the 2024 Communion in Action Report, we have chosen a few key points. This is not a geographical or quantitative review, nor is it a snapshot of *all* the **initiatives** and ongoing activities linked to the Focolare Movement around the world. We have based our report on data collected from each local area, as far as this was possible, and therefore there may be some inconsistencies.

Methods and criteria for data collection

This report is the result of a participatory process of data collection at the local level. Each local expression of the Movement contributed by providing information and testimonies according to its own possibilities and resources. The data reported here does not represent a complete or exhaustive map of all the projects and initiatives around the world, but rather a significant sample that offers an overview of the work currently underway. Some differences in time references or beneficiary categories reflect the diversity of local contexts and monitoring systems.

The 2024 Report therefore focuses on a number of key topics:

- welcome
- accompaniment of prisoners and their families
- education & formation
- fight against hunger
- health care
- fight against poverty
- sustainable communities
- the environment and creation
- fraternity
- peace

They also provide an active and real contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) promoted by the United Nations, with the specific topics of the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which this year celebrates its 10th anniversary, and with the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis' invitation to human fraternity for our times.

In this 2024 Communion in Action Report, we have also collected some testimonies that help to understand **the specific impact of the activities of the Focolare Movement**.

The initiatives presented in these pages – schools, educational and health centres, peace networks – stem from a vision that focuses on building fraternal relationships. Their added value lies in the way they operate; they generate trust, social cohesion and a sense of community.

Through the voices of those who witnessed their birth or studied them, distinctive features emerge that reinforce their long-term transformative capacity.

On page 24, you will find an interview with Fr. Vilson Groh, who offers an insight based on the Mysticism of the Abandonment. He has created a network of eight associations in Brazil, that are active in the areas of the most needy people, reaching over twenty thousand beneficiaries each year. On page 46, Mimma Siniscalco, an independent researcher in the field of education, gives a preview of the results of a study carried out on over thirty schools established within the Focolare Movement, revealing significant common characteristics. Juan Esteban Belderrein, a political scientist from Argentina, on page 70, talks about projects with generative power, whereas Luigino Bruni, professor of economics, helps us understand the meaning of the term *communion*.



Methods for the activities, projects, and achievements that stem from the charism of unity

Therefore, how can we create greater equality? How can we bring about a certain communion of goods? It's obvious that goods do not move on their own. It is hearts that have to be moved. **Therefore, we need to spread love, reciprocal love, which generates fraternity. We need to invade the world with love! And we need to begin with ourselves.**

Chiara Lubich



We might ask ourselves: is it possible to outline a common method for the social projects that have been born within the tradition of the Focolare Movement? If we look closely at them, even though they are very different from one another, we can discern a coherent and dynamic pattern. This method is never put together in a technical way, but it takes the form of a genuine pedagogy that starts from the desire to love every person and generates social transformation. It could be described as you'll read below, based on a re-reading of what Chiara Lubich said at the international conference **A Culture of Peace for the Unity of Peoples**, on the 11th of June 1988.

Everything begins from the lived Gospel

The projects originate from a spiritual life lived in a tangible way. When Gospel-based love is authentic, it naturally becomes service: **“love is not real if it is not service, if it is not practical”**. It is this existential root that makes these projects *spontaneous flowers* on the **“tree of our Movement”**.

Understanding the context and focusing on the person

The second step is to look at the local area and the specific person, as described in **“One city is not enough”**.

The projects respond to specific needs: unemployment, migration, exclusion, hunger, loneliness... But they do so not from a welfare perspective, but by recognising our common humanity and therefore valuing relationships and encouraging participation, starting from listening, closeness, reciprocity and sharing life.

Involvement and co-responsibility

Every project or action is intended as a collective endeavour. It is not a **“service for”**, but a **“walking with”**. The beneficiaries themselves are often directly involved in the planning or implementation of the project: **“sharing misfortunes and successes, spiritual and material goods”**. This creates supportive communities and transforms the recipient into a protagonist, placing reciprocity within the project at the heart of the relationship.

Formation to a new culture

The methods always include ongoing formation in love: love as a cultural and political category, not just a spiritual one; a selfless, unconditional love that becomes the basis of social friendship. It is not about **“doing good”**, but about learning to love in a mature, mutual and profound way. Love, in its *agape* dimension, is a transformative force that changes hearts, mentalities and structures: **“it is often a complete turnaround”**.



Love as a key to understanding society

Plato distinguished between three types of love: eros, filial love and agape, meaning that agape love already has a place in sociological tradition. Among the classics (such as Sorokin, Simmel, Luhmann and many others), we find authors who have addressed agapic action, acting out of love, as an important reality in social life. However, this type of study has not been recognised by the great sociological tradition, either because it has not been understood or because this possibility has been deliberately discarded. Today, however, agape is making a strong comeback precisely because of the complexity of globalised society.

Vera Araújo, sociologist



The importance of faith and openness to Providence

Key to this is an awareness of God's love and His action in history: we are not alone. The projects are developed in the confidence that God Himself accompanies and guides social change. This nourishes hope, even in facing difficulties: **“nothing is impossible for Him”**.

Development in different contexts

The projects take shape in a wide variety of contexts – from education to health, from development cooperation to political dialogue – without losing their spiritual identity. They are like **“lighted candles”** scattered throughout the world, instruments of light and guidance for society.

Community-based and participatory approach

The projects are never isolated: they grow in a network, sharing experiences and supporting each other. And the leadership is always as a community: we go ahead following a common guide, who is Jesus, present **“for where two or more are gathered in my name, I am there among them”** (Mt 18:20), the foundation of unity.

Addressing challenges together

In the development and management of social projects, difficulties – whether ordinary or extraordinary – are part of the process. The approach adopted is based on the belief that every obstacle can become an opportunity for growth if dealt with together. For this reason, the methods used emphasise communion as a generative dimension: a process that encourages realism and resilience, always placing at the centre people and the striving for the common good.



In summary, the development process can be represented as follows:



This methodology makes each project a practical platform for fraternity capable of having an impact on the social, political and cultural fabric with the courage of hope and the strength of communion. And often, it gives rise to a chain reaction. Yes, because other charisms have blossomed from the charism of unity: people deeply touched by this spirit have been able to perceive particular needs in an even newer and more original way, giving rise to new projects, that are distinct but deeply related from a spiritual point of view.

In some cases, people belonging to the Focolare Movement continue to animate, support and serve in these places – for example, as we describe on page 58, in the Fazenda da Esperança – seeking to ensure, through their living the spirituality, support, warmth and a family spirit.

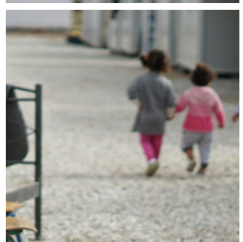
WELCOME

Loaded with all these goods go through the streets, go up into attics and down into cellars, seek out Christ in public and private places, at the stations, along the railways, in the slums, and caress him above all with your smile.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 10:
Reduced Inequalities

Laudato si':
Migration, welcome and interculturality

Fratelli tutti:
To Welcome, protect, promote and integrate



Team Juan Carlos Duque

Where: Peru, Lima, Arequipa, Trujillo
Direct beneficiaries (2017-2024): 500
Indirect beneficiaries (2017-2024): 1,500
Amount (2017-2024): € 110,000

Context

Almost 8 million Venezuelans have left their country since the beginning of the crisis. Of these, 1.7 million have been generously welcomed by Peru, which opened its doors to this unexpected influx of migrants. The Focolare communities in Lima, Arequipa and Trujillo launched a hospitality initiative that gradually expanded to other faith communities, leading to the creation of CIREMI, the Peru Interreligious Committee for Refugees and Migrants.

Experiences of Life

It all began spontaneously, with the aim of **responding to the cry of humanity that was migrating**. It was the 10th of December 2017, the date when two people belonging to the Focolare Movement arrived in Peru from Venezuela. The warm welcome given to this couple gave rise to our support for Venezuelan migrants. At the height of the crisis, 5,000 migrants arrived in Peru every day. Even though we did not have a dedicated place to accommodate them, we welcomed,

TAGS

WELCOMING_MIGRANTS
ACTIVE_CITIZENSHIP
INTERCULTURAL_DIALOGUE
BASIC_EDUCATION
HUMAN_FORMATION
SOCIAL_INCLUSION
CLOSENESS
LOCAL_DEVELOPMENT
VOLUNTEERING

accompanied, supported and helped them with their basic needs: clothes, blankets, food, health care, education and documents. We were guided by Pope Francis' four verbs: to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate. Our team grew from three to twelve people, and we now have a **worldwide network of supporters**. There is a whole social dimension that may be less visible but nonetheless real: people **saved from suicide or abortion, couples in crisis**, women rescued from violence and abuse; men and women who have been helped in finding work or sorting out documents; people who arrived almost as 'beggars' but who have **regained their dignity**; the sick being supported for years; families arriving with nothing who have been accompanied towards stability.



Social Cooperative Formazione e Comunità (Fo.Co.) Non-profit Organization

Where: Italy, Ragusa

Direct beneficiaries: 100–150 migrants per month, including unaccompanied minors from Sub-Saharan Africa, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco

Indirect beneficiaries: officers, local and national public authorities

www.coopfoco.org

Context

Sicily, at the crossroads of the Mediterranean, has been formed by centuries of migration and continues to be today,

being one of the main and most dangerous migration routes across the Mediterranean Sea. In 2024 alone, 53,231 migrants arrived by sea (numbers vary depending on migration policies).

Fo.Co. [Formation and Communion], a Non-profit Organization, active since 2012, is operating in Sicily with projects of welcome and integration for migrants, unaccompanied foreign minors, runs communities for minors and provides training. It works in partnership with public and private institutions, promoting educational, cultural and legal courses. Since 2024, it has strengthened its training programmes and has joined European initiatives for cohesion and inclusion.

Since its foundation, the Cooperative has managed reception projects for asylum seekers and holders of international protection within the Welcome-Integration System (SAI) Network, financed by the Ministry of the Interior's Asylum Funds and FAMI funds from the European Union. Fo.Co. has also created communities for unaccompanied foreign minors and promoted community-based reception projects for adults. It also runs two communities in Sicily and Puglia for minors with criminal charges, under agreements with the Juvenile Justice Centres.

TAGS

WELCOMING_MIGRANTS
INTERCULTURAL_DIALOGUE
BASIC_EDUCATION
HUMAN_FORMATION
SOCIAL_INCLUSION
UNACCOMPANIED_MINORS
LOCAL_DEVELOPMENT

Experiences of Life

Fatou, Amadou, Ensa and Zainab graduated

The 1st of June 2024 was a memorable day for the students of the Gambia College School of Education. Fatou, Amadou, Ensa and Zainab, all beneficiaries of the "Maria Teresa Illiano" programme, graduated. The project "Young People in Gambia – Maria Teresa Illiano" is a scholarship programme that supports young, talented students who are at risk of dropping out of school due to poverty. It focuses on students in Gambia and Senegal who are concluding high school or university education and who **risk having to leave school for economic reasons thus falling into the tragedy of forced migration.**



Social Cooperative One City is not Enough (Non-profit organization)

Where: Italy, Marino Laziale (Rome)

Direct beneficiaries: 90+ people from Afghanistan, Egypt, Morocco, Colombia, Nigeria, Italy, Romania, Ukraine, Russia

Indirect beneficiaries: families, women, minors, social workers

Amount (2024): € 700,000

www.unacittanonbastacoop.com

Context

Active since 2011, “One City is not Enough” promotes hospitality, inclusion and social-health assistance for migrants, vulnerable families and women in difficulty. Through a network that brings together volunteering and social cooperation, the

social cooperative provides housing, educational support and integration programmes in collaboration with local town councils, the local health authority (ASL) and the Prefecture of Rome. Intercultural dialogue is at the heart of its social mission.

TAGS

WELCOMING_MIGRANTS
ACTIVE_CITIZENSHIP
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BASIC_EDUCATION
HUMAN_FORMATION
SOCIAL_INCLUSION
LOCAL_DEVELOPMENT

Main projects include:

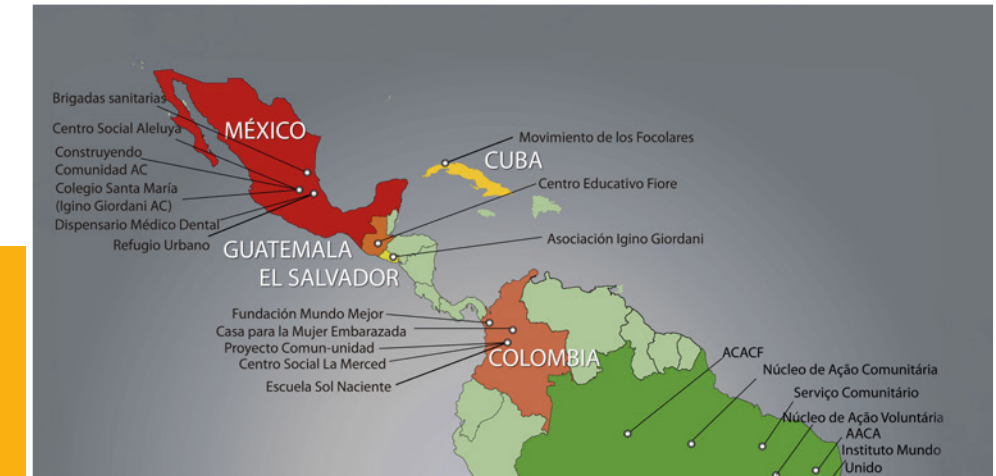
- A Special Welcome Centre for migrant families (Prefecture of Rome) and the integration project “Facciamo Casa Insieme” [Let’s Build a Home Together];
- Welcome Centre for abandoned women and children (Town council of Rome);
- Emergency social assistance with overnight shelter (ASL RM6 [specific local health authority] and the town councils of Marino Laziale and Ciampino);
- After-school assistance for primary and secondary pupils in Marino Laziale;
- Welcome and integration support for Afghan families.

Experiences of Life

Dialogue is a constant tool for integration.

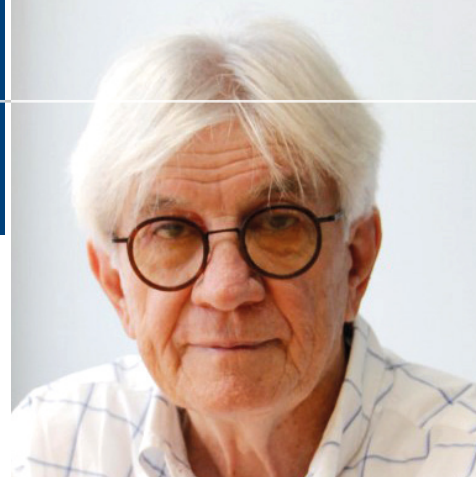
With a group of Muslims, we shared various aspects of their religion and the socio-political difficulties they face, due to their faith, especially in Europe. We spoke to them about “universal fraternity”: they were enthusiastic, calling it a key path for conflict resolution. They asked us to continue and to continue together, spreading this way of “being” so that everyone might come to share the same feelings.

UNIRedes a network of fraternity for Latin America



Projects inspired by the Mysticism of Abandonment

Interview with Padre Vilson Groh



Father Vilson Groh is the founder of the Vilson Groh Institute in Florianópolis, Brazil, a network of eight educational organisations that has been engaged in grassroots work for over forty years. Each year, this network reaches more than 6,000 students and 20,000 people.

www.vilsongroh.org

What are the distinguishing features of the social and educational work you have seen begin and grow — the work that has its roots in the spirituality of the Focolare Movement?

I believe that the fundamental dimension of my journey was the discovery, within the charism of unity, of a profound understanding of Jesus Forsaken (I'm referring to the particular moment in Jesus' life when, before dying, he cried out,

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"). I have concretely encountered this cry, this wound of humanity, in the reality of social inequality in the areas where I live.

For this reason, forty-four years ago, I made a life choice: to live in the peripheries, moved by this **mysticism of the abandonment**, which opens up a path of resurrection towards a culture of life, one that does not remain indifferent to suffering and injustice, but which seeks to transform them. This spirituality, inspired by the Trinitarian model of love between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, calls us to bring a community, modelled on that same kind of relationship to the heart of society, doing so through social justice and the promotion of the common good. It is a path that demands coherence between what we say and what we do.

A second element I consider distinctive is "to act with", living together, learning together, an anthropological rereading of the culture of those who are *impoverished* and excluded. To live this culture means learning to coexist with it, not merely tolerating it, but recognising it and allowing oneself to be transformed by it. From this a deep educational work develops.

A third key feature is the building of bridges between different groups and social classes. I believe that one of the secrets of the charism lies precisely here: Jesus Forsaken as a bridge between centre and periphery, between cultures and realities that seem far apart. This is how a true culture of encounter is built, one that generates opportunities.

On our journey, we have chosen education, accompanying children, adolescents and young people from their earliest years through to university. It is a path which has developed in very poor areas and that generates tangible, real hope.

To look at these communities through the eyes of Jesus Forsaken means to see their hidden potential and to ask: how can we work within this area? It means meeting the gaze of a child or a teenager, **catching that gaze and searching for the hope that lies behind those eyes**, committing oneself to making that hope become tangible, a possibility and something lasting.

For me, this is the deep core of the experience of the charism of unity in Latin America, within the journey of the Latin American Church and in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the Conferences of Medellín, Puebla, Santo Domingo and Aparecida.

In this, I see the central distinction between many social projects and **those that are born from a mysticism, from a charism.**

What kind of transformation have you seen in people and in society thanks to these projects? How do you think such transformation can be recognised or measured?

I believe that the impact of an educational and social project like ours can be measured by **the building of public policies at the local level.**

Another way to assess impact is by observing **the development of a broader vision of citizenship and of the city itself.** To work on the city means working on a human right, lived through the exercise of citizenship and this begins to generate an impact in the area. The area then starts to be transformed.

From a **transformative perspective**, education, for example, has a very strong impact on the life of a community.

And the path broadens — as we are doing now — towards a **technological perspective.** We live in a city, Florianópolis, where a major technological hub is growing, a true ecosystem of innovation. We are engaging with this dynamic, seeking tangible ways to create spaces where young people can also grow, love themselves, expand their knowledge and, at the same time, integrate into this context.

Another impact lies in the **relationship with the world of business.** When entrepreneurs come into contact with the reality of poverty and see tangible, real projects, they begin to engage — whether by contributing their management skills or through financial support. It is difficult to involve entrepreneurs unless their hearts are motivated.

To sum up, we can recognise transformation through the building of public policies in the area, the emergence of a new outlook on citizenship and the city, the enhancement of the city from educational and technological perspectives and the engagement of the business sector.

Then, as a priest with an ecclesial role, I believe that this whole awakening is deeply connected with the **Word of God** — in the sense of **hope**. The incarnation of hope, of the verb “to hope actively” (*esperançar*), is the profound perspective also found in Pope Francis’ first document, *Evangelii Gaudium* — the Joy of the Gospel.

In this video, Pão e Beleza [Bread and Beauty], Father Vilson Groh tells his story



ACCOMPANIMENT OF PRISONERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Then look for the poorest people, the destitute, the forsaken, the orphans, the prisoners. Without pausing your action

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 10:
Reduced Inequalities

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 16:
Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Laudato si':
Integral Ecology and Social Justice

Fratelli tutti:
Respect for the human dignity of
persons deprived of their freedom

Effathà Laus

Where: Italy, Lodi

www.effathalaus.wordpress.com

Context

Effathà Laus, founded in 2015 in Lodi, works in three areas: education and integration of migrants, interpersonal relationships training with prisoners and the promotion of peace in primary schools. The association creates spaces for dialogue, listening and authentic relationships, collaborating with local and educational institutions. Its activities promote inclusion, dignity and environmental sensitivity. "Effathà Laus" means "Lodi be opened". Already from the name so full of meaning, comes an invitation to openness;

to open not only the heart, mind and arms, but also the city itself, to universal fraternity, to build a future of peace. They recounted, "In our experience, the Focolare Movement is like the soul of a body, while the Effathà Laus association is like the active arms that make those ideas real. Just as flowers

of different colours express various aspects of life: economy and work, cultural and social integration, justice, art, health, education, communication, they all reflect values and ideals, like a sketch of a more fraternal society and a society that promotes human values."

Experiences of Life

Courage, humility, creativity, dignity, fragility, fidelity, forgiveness, beauty, joy and love: these are the 10 words that matter and that have inspired the **education for relationships** programme in the Lodi Prison. The inspiration comes from the book and TV broadcast "The few things that matter" by Don Luigi Verdi and the singer-songwriter Simone Cristicchi. At the end of this programme, in an event with volunteers, prisoners and one of the authors, a booklet containing the prisoners' reflections on the proposed themes was presented. The gift of the booklet to each of those present was accompanied by a papier-mâché rose made by the inmates.

TAGS

ACCOMPANIMENT_PRISONERS
WELCOMING_MIGRANTS
INTERCULTURAL_DIALOGUE
SOCIAL_INCLUSION
PEACE_RIGHTS
VOLUNTEERING



Sempre Persona

Where: Italy, Rome

Direct beneficiaries: Prisoners/ex-prisoners and their families of the prison of Rebibbia in Rome

Context

Sempre Persona [Always a Person] is a project that accompanies the families of prisoners and ex-prisoners, offering listening, tangible help and interpersonal support. Born from a personal experience in Rebibbia prison, it focuses on social reintegration and family reconciliation, restoring dignity to people often forgotten by society. It is based on interpersonal relationships and youth volunteering. It responds to the "cry of the least" by welcoming and accompanying people who often live on the margins of society, in particular those most affected by poverty, abandonment and the breakdown of family ties.

Experiences of Life

"Alfonso, can I ask you a personal favour?"

"I would like you to visit my mother, who is seriously ill." Alfonso accepts the request of a prisoner. During the meeting, the woman speaks in a tired but decisive voice: "My son is good.

His friends led him astray. I'm very sick, I'm dying. I see you love my son, so I entrust him to you."

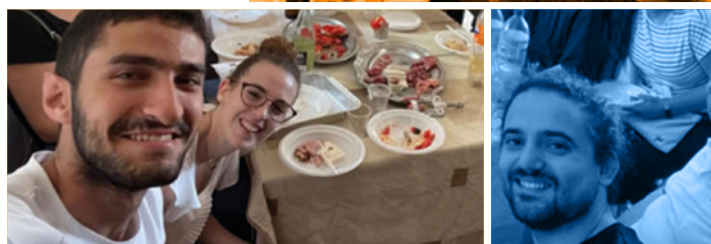
That meeting leaves its mark. Alfonso De Nicola – a focolarino and the initiator of the project - continues

TAGS

WELCOMING_MIGRANTS
ACTIVE_CITIZENSHIP
INTERCULTURAL_DIALOGUE
BASIC_EDUCATION
HUMAN_FORMATION
SOCIAL_INCLUSION
LOCAL_DEVELOPMENT

to write to the young man and, after some time, they meet in person in the prison. From that first meeting, a dialogue began that, over time, also involved other prisoners. Many of them ask for help not only for themselves, but for their families, who are often in difficult situations. Alfonso understands that there, in those stories characterized

by mistakes and fragility, is the reason for his commitment. Thirty years have passed since that letter, and the association *Sempre Persona* today involves other volunteers, families and ex-prisoners, whose work starts from listening, from building relationships and trusting in the possibility of rehabilitation. It is especially the young people who have welcomed the witness of Alfonso, a seed that is growing in the new generations, those that Chiara Lubich has always encouraged to a concrete and active commitment to respond to the many moral and material needs, starting from the place where we live.



Association Uomo Mondo (Volunteering organization)

Where: Italy, Treviso

Direct beneficiaries: 20 families (Italy), 120 prisoners, 100+ families in Africa, Lebanon, Syria, the Holy Land
Indirect beneficiaries: students and young volunteers

Context

Uomo Mondo [Global Person] was founded in 1997 as a solidarity network to send international aid (to Southeast Europe, Africa and the Middle East), but today it is characterized by local activities in support of vulnerable families and prisoners. It promotes active citizenship with formation schools on politics for young people. It is supported by volunteers and collaborates with bodies and associations in the Veneto region and abroad. It is particularly active in the prison of Treviso.

TAGS

PRISONERS_AND_THEIR_FAMILIES
HUMAN_FORMATION
SOCIAL_INCLUSION
MENTAL_HEALTH
VOLUNTEERING



EDUCATION

Then promise him eternal love so that the places you are unable to go may be reached by your prayers and your sufferings, united to the Sacrifice of the altar. Leave no one feeling alone, and do not be limited in your promises, because you go in the name of the Almighty.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4:

Quality education

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5:

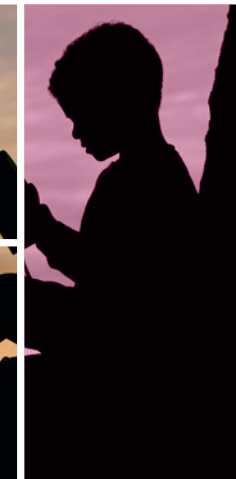
Gender Equality

Laudato si':

Integral Education and Training

Fratelli tutti:

Every human being possesses an inalienable dignity



The Education section takes us on a journey to Africa and Latin America. Schools established within the Focolare Movement share certain common features. An interview with Prof. Mimma Siniscalco in the following pages will help us understand the unique characteristics of this social and educational initiative.

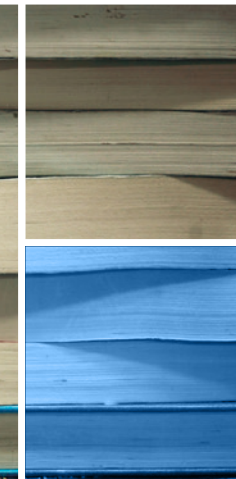
Here is a preview: "In most cases, these schools were established as **social projects** in response to a painful situation, a need – for food, health, safety, shelter and care – but they soon gave rise to a real educational project.

In most cases, this focuses on and gives priority to those who are most disadvantaged, with the aim of breaking the cycle of poverty. But even in schools that tend to cater for other social backgrounds, the choice of solidarity with the poorest people emerges."

(continued on page 46)

TAGS

ACTIVE_CITIZENSHIP
INTERCULTURAL_DIALOGUE
BASIC_EDUCATION
HUMAN_FORMATION
SOCIAL_INCLUSION
PREVENTION
PRIMARY_HEALTH
LOCAL_DEVELOPMENT



AFRICA

Unité Nursery School

Where: Burkina Faso
Beneficiari: 43 children, 43 families, 6 educators

Context: With over 60% of Muslim children in a Christian school, the Unité [Unity] Centre, located in a disadvantaged neighbourhood of **Bobo-Dioulasso**, offers a culture of welcome and peace to children of various Churches and different religions.

Wê-Mun (There is room)

Where: Ivory Coast
Direct beneficiaries: 283 children, 150 families, 15 tutors/adults
Indirect beneficiaries: 1,250

Context: The project takes place in the city of **Man** in a context of triple crisis: school, family and society. For many young people who cannot read or write, Wê-Mun represents their last chance for social inclusion.

The Bridge

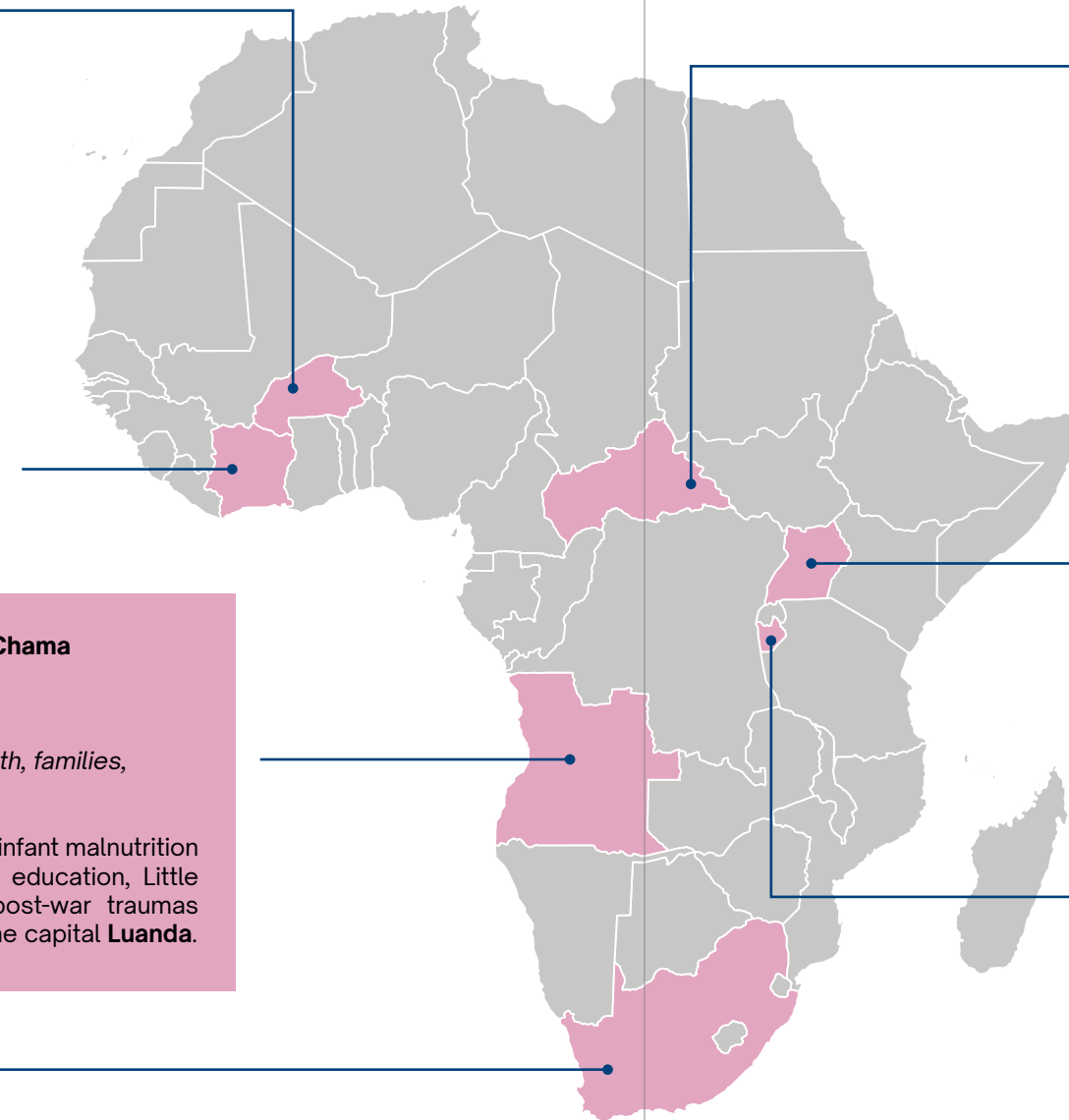
Where: South Africa
Direct beneficiaries: over 400

Context: It started in 2017 in **Hartswater (Northern Cape)** with the provision of after-school activities, to reduce the barriers and inequalities left by the apartheid regime, during which some ethnic groups had very limited access to the study of English, science and mathematics.

Children's Centre Pequena Chama (Little Flame)

Where: Angola
Beneficiari: 110 children, youth, families, educators, local community

Context: From responding to infant malnutrition to providing early childhood education, Little Flame brings light to the post-war traumas among displaced people in the capital **Luanda**.



NASSO Social Services Organization of Namugongo

Where: Uganda
Direct beneficiaries: over 49,000 people assisted; 2,400 mothers trained; 120 young people trained; beneficiaries from Uganda, Kenya, Italy, Portugal, Congo; 500 people in the nutrition programme

Context: Since the year 2000, NASSO has played a key role in providing early childhood development education to vulnerable children between the ages of 3 and 5 in its kindergarten programmes. In addition to education, children benefit from a food programme. NASSO continues to support these children throughout their schooling, from primary school to university in some cases, helping to train them as active and responsible Ugandan citizens.

Sainte-Claire School Complex

Where: Central African Republic
Direct beneficiaries: 880 children (3–15 years), 24 educators (including service personnel)
Indirect beneficiaries: 3,000 families

Context: One of the most interesting results of this activity is the experience of joy linked to doing good. The School opened in 2017 in **Bangui** to provide education to the children of refugees from the civil war, offering a holistic education that responds to primary needs and contributes to the integral development of the person.

Chiara Luce Social Centre

Where: Burundi
Direct beneficiaries: 159 children, 30 families, young people and parents involved in education and support for environmental balance

Context: In **Bujumbura**, in the district of **Kinama**, one of the most affected by the civil war, after starting with adult literacy courses, the Focolare community quickly began to offer nutritional and educational assistance to children. It has been active since 2007.

The birth of the Unité Centre

Where: Burkina Faso

Experiences of Life

Sarfalao is a difficult and challenging neighbourhood of Bobo-Dioulasso, the second largest city in the country. The extreme situations include the absence of early childhood facilities. Children aged 3 - 6 spend their time on the street, away from adult supervision. In the eyes of Elde, a kindergarten expert, this situation was crying out for help. She set in motion a chain of social transformation that led to the birth of the *Unité [Unity] Nursery School* in 2022. It prepares children for entry into primary schools. The Focolare Movement had a piece of land with an unused building. Some small renovations were carried out to enable the children, aged 3 - 4 and later 5-year-olds, to begin school. Following discussion with New Families, the head teacher and staff were recruited. The Government of Burkina Faso granted the necessary permission.

TAGS

ACTIVE_CITIZENSHIP
 INTERCULTURAL_DIALOGUE
 BASIC_EDUCATION
 HUMAN_TRAINING
 SOCIAL_INCLUSION
 PREVENTION

Today the school has three classrooms, a kitchen, toilets, an office and a play area. The workers told us: "The name of our small school, *Unité*, derives precisely from its characteristic of welcoming everyone, regardless of religion. It makes us happy to know that with our spirituality Christian and Muslim children acquire a treasure that will last a lifetime. And they bring this to their families as well. We are still at the beginning,

and we have many challenges to overcome, but we believe that if we are united and work together, we can make this small social activity a seed of light first of all for the local community and then for all Burkinabé people".



Pequena Chama

Where: Angola

Experiences of Life

26 years of civil war in Angola had devastated the country until 2002. 500,000 people died and over a million were internally displaced, forced to leave their homes. The capital, Luanda, became the safest place to take refuge.

The Pequena Chama [Little Flame] Children's Centre (CIPC) started from a community initiative in the immediate post-war period. The Mussulo Peninsula is located in the province of Luanda and has about 6,000 inhabitants. Visiting Mussulo for a spiritual retreat, the focolarine realized the high number of children at risk due to malnutrition. Together with others, they started a *community kitchen* but food, alone, was not enough.

Children also need education and so the "one brick per head" action took off, with which people in the community contributed to the construction of a school. 110 children per year attend the centre for both early childhood education and tutoring.

TAGS

BASIC_EDUCATION
 ZERO_HUNGER
 HUMAN_FORMATION
 SOCIAL_INCLUSION
 PREVENTION
 PRIMARY_HEALTH
 LOCAL_DEVELOPMENT

They come from low-income families, afflicted by various social challenges: unemployment, disintegration, illiteracy, prostitution and addictions. To support the right to quality education (SDG 4), within the education and training sector, the CIPC mainly offers two services: regular early childhood classes and daily food support.

Tackling malnutrition and food insecurity is essential to achieving the goal which guarantees the right to quality education.



LATIN AMERICA

French-English high school

Where: Mexico, Mexicali

Direct beneficiaries: 1,415 students

Indirect beneficiaries: 165 educators, families, past pupils, local institutions

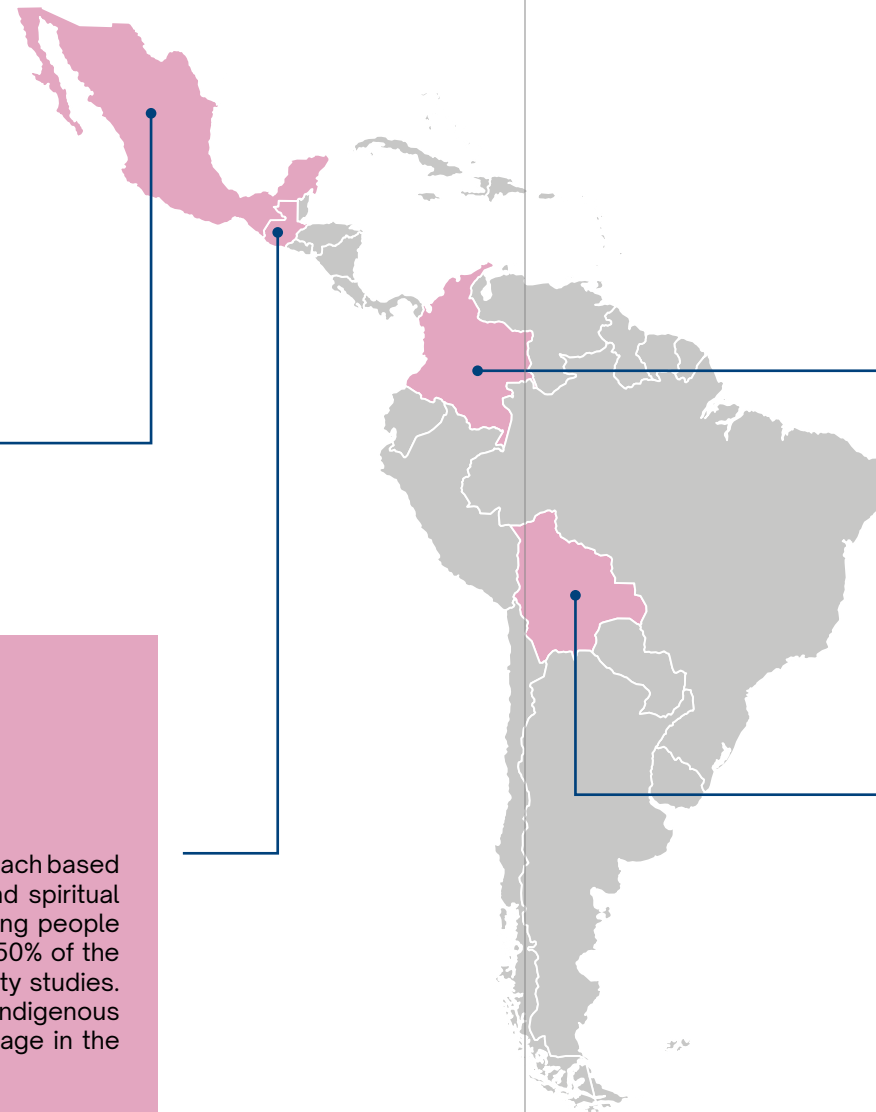
Context: The French-English High School, in the particular context of the border with the United States, has been promoting comprehensive education since 2012. In addition to curricular teaching, it runs projects on ecology, citizenship, interreligious dialogue, sport and art and for the inclusion of neuro-divergent students.

Fiore Educational Centre

Where: Guatemala, Mixco

Direct beneficiaries: 44 children, 7 educators, 60 parents, families in the neighbourhood

Context: Established in 2003, the school adopts an integral approach based on the inductive method, promoting the academic, physical and spiritual development of students. Out of about 3,000 children and young people between the ages of 4 and 15 educated over time, more than 50% of the first five graduating classes continued with technical or university studies. The presence of children from different ethnic groups and indigenous peoples of the area and the integration of the Kaqchikel language in the school curriculum are special characteristics.



Sol Nascente School

Where: Colombia, Tocancipá

Direct beneficiaries: 135 pupils each year, 200 families

Indirect beneficiaries: teachers, rural communities

Context: Very young children inquisitively came to play near the Mariapolis Centre. Their parents were at work all day in the fast-growing city of Tocancipá. 27 years have passed since that first "approach" and the Sol Nascente [Rising Sun] School has formed generations not only by giving an education, but by educating in a culture of peace and interpersonal relationships.

UNISOL Foundation

Where: Bolivia, Cochabamba

Direct beneficiaries: about 350 people, including children, parents, educators, volunteers, local and international collaborators

Indirect beneficiaries: about 1,000

Context: The UNISOL Foundation develops an approach of social trust, offering children a safe and educational space that fosters the development of basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Parents can work in peace, while families participate in family vegetable garden projects to produce organic food and strengthen their autonomy.

French-English High School

Where: Mexico, Mexicali

Experiences of Life

The nature of our region, Mexicali, in Mexico, a border city with the United States, has meant that we were living with a culture marked by the pain of division. Our geographical position places us on the border between two countries separated by a wall. Despite this, we have learned to live together, share our cultures and generate paths of unity.

In this city, born from the spirit of migration and where the issue of migration still represents one of the most painful shadows with which we live on a daily basis, Chiara Lubich's message has

TAGS

ACTIVE_CITIZENSHIP
INTERCULTURAL_DIALOGUE
BASIC_EDUCATION
HUMAN_FORMATION
SPIRITUAL_FORMATION

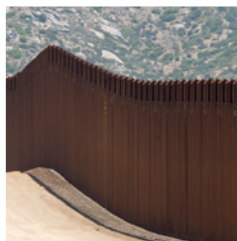
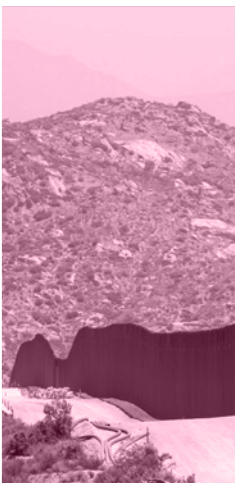
found great resonance. Her invitation to unity among peoples and fraternity deeply touched our reality.

The name "French-English High School" expresses the desire to open up to personal and intercultural relationships through the study of new languages, traditions and customs.

In August 2012, the first school year began with 32 students in three classes and a team of 12 teachers and administrative staff.

It is worth underlining the significant support offered by our institution to the work contexts in which some families of our students operate. Full-time schooling allows parents to leave their children at school for the duration of their working day.

During these years, the project has completed 13 school cycles, accompanying about 600 young people to their graduation.



Sol Nascente School

Where: Colombia, Tocancipá

Experiences of Life

Ruddy Neuque (former student and teacher of art education), says: "Studying at the Sol Nascente [Rising Sun] School was a fundamental stage of my life, not only for everything I learned, but for the experiences that have profoundly marked my personal and professional training.

This is where I learned values such as respect, responsibility and solidarity - principles that still guide my choices today. I remember with gratitude the teachers who, with patience and dedication, cultivated a love of learning in me and a desire to contribute positively to society.

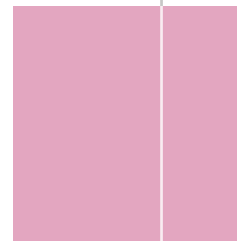
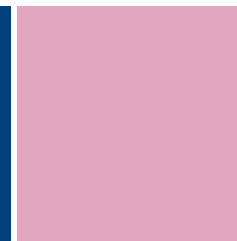
Returning to this school as a teacher is an honour and a great responsibility for me: it is an opportunity to give back what I have received, but also a constant commitment to the education of new generations. Being a teacher at the Sol

TAGS

ACTIVE_CITIZENSHIP
BASIC_EDUCATION
HUMAN_FORMATION
SPIRITUAL_FORMATION
SOCIAL_INCLUSION

Nascente means much more than transmitting information. It means accompanying, inspiring, supporting and participating in the emotional, social and educational growth of each student. It means facing the challenges of education every day with vocation, empathy and hope.

This dual belonging, as a former student and now a teacher, allows me to deeply understand the needs of students and to work from my living memory of what it really means to be part of this educational community. The Sol Nascente School not only educated me, but today it gives me the opportunity to educate others."



FORMATION

If others, having got to know your life and having seen with their own eyes the gifts you have, ask you to talk, then speak, but let the essence of your speech be the things you have learned from life.



Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 8:
Decent Work and Economic Growth

Laudato si':
Integral Education
and Training

Fratelli tutti:
Universal Love
that Promotes Persons

In different social and cultural contexts, educational experiences emerge that put the person, the environment and the community at the centre, offering answers to the challenges of inequality, poverty and unemployment. In line with the UNESCO concept of Quality Technical and Vocational Education and Training for All (TVET), these initiatives promote paths of human and professional growth that contribute to sustainable and inclusive development, enhancing dignified work and active participation.

From Uganda to the Philippines, from Argentina to Italy, integrated training models that intertwine technical skills, values of solidarity, entrepreneurship and care for the common good, are developing. In this framework, SDG 8 is creatively and practically applied: young people excluded from the school system, vulnerable families, local communities are involved in transformative processes that generate autonomy, cohesion and new opportunities. These experiences demonstrate that another economy is possible, based on the centrality of the person and the educational strength of fraternity.

Experiences of Life

The “ONE Cooperative” is so called precisely because we are inspired by “that all may be one” (*Jn. 17:21*). We think we can say that it is bringing more beautiful fruits than was foreseen by the initial reason for which the cooperative was born. Over time it has grown; we have observed the area, its needs, the complex dynamics of the new generations and we have changed our

reason for existing towards these needs. It is definitely complicated to intervene in a specific area (Calabria) that remains increasingly devoid of young minds that can bring about change.

A large percentage move away from the region to complete their studies and often, wherever they go, they get interesting job offers and unfortunately never return to their hometown. Despite this, we are able to make our small contribution.

TAGS

ACTIVE_CITIZENSHIP
SOCIAL_COMMUNICATION
INTERCULTURAL_DIALOGUE
BASIC_EDUCATION
PROFESSIONAL_FORMATION
SPIRITUAL_FORMATION
SOCIAL_INCLUSION
HEALTH_WELLBEING
LOCAL_DEVELOPMENT
ECOLOGICAL_TRANSITION

Zoom Ton Couple

Where: France

An online pathway created in 2020 to help couples, married or not, care for their relationship. It involves participants from France, Belgium, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Lebanon, Canada and the Island of Reunion, with meetings on topics related to life as a couple, testimonies and dialogue. It promotes listening, communication and relational growth, with a method that is accessible, sustainable and repeatable. Similar programmes have already been developed in Dutch for the Netherlands and in Arabic for Lebanon and other Middle Eastern countries.

Focolare Carpentry Training Center (FCTC)

Where: Philippines

The FCTC, active since 1970 in Cainta, trains young people excluded from the school system, in carpentry and furniture finishing. In an inclusive and intercultural environment, it promotes dignity, employability and community spirit. With over 350 employed graduates, some who have become entrepreneurs, it is a model of transformative education and dignified work. From 2024, it has undertaken new courses and collaboration with businesses and public bodies.

Formazione alla leadership e alla pace

Where: Portugal, Azores

This is a widespread initiative in the islands of Santa Maria and San Miguel with activities for young people, children and communities. The project has trained 110 young people in leadership for unity and peace. Children have been trained in the culture of sharing. Ecumenical meetings strengthen dialogue between Christian denominations. Local actions for the common good have included planting trees and enhancing local culture.

Aurora Centre

Where: Argentina, Santa María di Catamarca

The Aurora Centre is an artistic technical school that trains young people in traditional arts and crafts to enhance the cultural and craftwork heritage of the Andean region. It offers educational certification to artisans allowing better access to the labour market. It offers 6 professional courses and workshops open to the community, contributing to training, youth work and the promotion of local identity. It involves over 100 students and various local partners.

Pag-asa Social Center

Where: Philippines, Tagaytay

Active since 1997 in Tagaytay, it promotes the integral development of children and families in vulnerable situations. In 2024, it provided education, health, safeguarding, post-emergency aid and values-based education to over 1,100 people. The approach is global and rooted in the local culture. It is strengthened by an international network and numerous awards. The centre bears witness to concrete fraternity and care for human dignity on a daily basis.

Chicco di Grano Mariapolis Centre

Where: Uganda, Kampala

The *Chicco di Grano* [Grain of Wheat] Mariapolis Centre was founded in 1988 as a place of spiritual and social formation for the Focolare Movement and local ecclesial realities. It hosts retreats, seminars, ecumenical meetings and youth initiatives. Over the years, it has expanded its services by welcoming religious groups, families and pilgrims, fostering dialogue, unity and self-sustainability.

ONE Cooperative

Where: Italy, Crotone

This is a Social Cooperative founded in 2013 after following a training course on Civil Economy and Communion. It promotes active citizenship, informal education, ecology and social inclusion through innovative workshops, civic education, European reception and mobility. It involves minors, adults and volunteers of the European Solidarity Corps in environment, culture and community projects in the region aimed at combating educational poverty. It works closely with local and international authorities. It offers workshops on mathematics applied to murals, history applied to comics, chemistry applied to pastry making, robotics and photography workshops as a means of promoting civic education.



A virtual journey through classrooms around the world

Interview with **Mimma Siniscalco**



Mimma Siniscalco is Italian and lives near Paris in France. She is an independent researcher in the field of education. Since 2001 she has worked as an external expert for INVALSI (National Institute for the Evaluation of the Italian Educational System of Education and Training). Since 2023 she has been President of the ADI, Italian Teachers and Principals Association, and is currently coordinator of the international network EdU-Education for Unity. In this interview, she gives us a preview of some results of a research meeting-project with schools and educational institutions from different parts of the world that have their roots in the Charism of Unity.

*Between 2024 and the beginning of 2025, with the team of EdU and New Humanity, we went on a virtual trip to **19 schools** (counting the Petite Flamme schools, as one institute even though they cover different levels). We visited the following regions: Africa (Democratic Republic of Congo), Asia (Philippines), the Middle East (Lebanon and Syria), Latin America (Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Dominican Republic and Venezuela) and Southeastern Europe (Croatia). The project is still ongoing and we will continue the process with other schools.*

The two-hour meeting-interview with each of them, had these objectives:

- To enucleate educational practices and how they work, to examine how the charism of unity becomes school and education in different contexts and cultures
- To create a space for dialogue
- To explore interest in forming a network, in the perspective of mutual support and further recognition

What, then, are the distinctive features of the social and educational action that you encountered and that has its roots in the spirituality of the Focolare Movement?

In these schools, which teach fraternity and peace, we found several characteristics that unite them. We are presenting a preview of our study here.

In most cases, these schools started as **social activities**, to respond to a difficult situation, to a need, for example for food, health, safety, hospitality or care, but they soon gave life to a real educational project. This in most cases targets and prioritizes the most disadvantaged people, with the aim of breaking the cycle of poverty. But even in schools where there is a tendency to address other social environments, the choice of solidarity towards the poorest people emerges.

The aim is to provide a **quality education**. Schools and centres often begin with volunteers and people motivated by the desire to help and serve, but it soon becomes clear that training is needed. Initial training and continuous updating are pursued with the aspiration of creating a high quality educational project, which achieves excellent results, as has been recognized in several cases (e.g. Mexico, Democratic Republic of Congo).

The educational project is carried out by **an educating community strengthened by a communion of intent and a commitment to embody those values** of respect, collaboration and mutual love that it desires to transmit.

Education is integral, it concerns the person as a whole, it cares for the mind, the ability to read, write and have knowledge in the different disciplines, but also for self-care and the ability to relate to others.

The school is open to the world, with an openness that goes in both directions. On the one hand it **welcomes and involves the family and the community and on the other it comes out of its own backyard and goes towards the surrounding environment, the community and the world**. There is an awareness that it is difficult to have a profound impact if the educational action of the school is not harmonised with that of the family and the original environment. At the same time, in a natural way, the educational path leads to going out of the classroom and school. Children are taken to see places they would not otherwise see, to have experiences they would not otherwise meet.

At the heart of it all are relationships based on mutual love. This is the central principle, which permeates relationships within the educating community, educators with students and families and, little by little, students with educators and with each other.

Finally, these schools have **transformative results**, which come to light over time.

How do you think the contribution of these schools can be recognised or measured?

This question touches on an essential point. How to **recognize** this transformation, what does it mean to “identify” it, to “highlight” it and how to **measure it**? That is, how to demonstrate the effects and value of these schools with empirical evidence? Today, most of these schools are going through a challenging period, due to the loss of funding. They are engaged in a process of reflection on the changes which need to be made in the interests of greater self-sustainability. One of the essential elements in this process is **the collection of data that highlights their impact**. When we talk about data in the educational field, we normally think of **the rates of the completion of education or results in achievement or proficiency tests**.

In the case of these educational realities, it is necessary to reason about what "other data", somewhat different or additional to traditional ones, which can be collected to highlight the specific contribution of the proposed training. The voice of those who have attended and those who have worked in those schools for a long time is essential. This could help get more recognition and support. But these data would also be useful to further focus the cornerstones of its proposal and its operation. This data is an essential element to move forward.



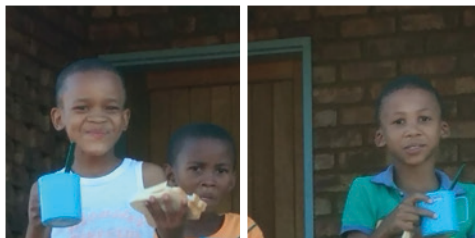
ZERO HUNGER

If someone is hungry, take them food, if naked, take them clothing. If you have neither clothes nor food [to offer people], ask for these from the Eternal Father with faith, because they are necessary for his Son Christ, who you wish to serve in every human person. And he will hear you.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2:
Defeat hunger

Laudato si':
Social and Economic Justice;
Health and Integral Well-Being

Fratelli tutti:
Hunger is criminal



You cannot educate children if they have an empty stomach. And you cannot just give them food without offering them education – and therefore a future – as well as the necessary medical care. When the social projects that we are talking about cater for the most vulnerable, they often intervene in multiple sectors: it is not possible to label them as belonging to one area or another. And sometimes they change over time, when needs change.

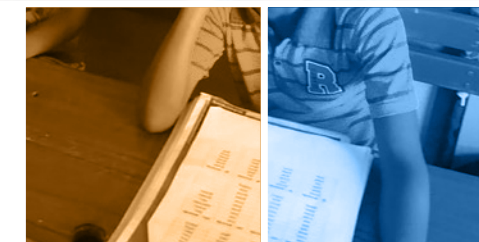
This is because they are guided not by theory, but by a deep listening to the cries of those who are suffering, right beside us. This is why the Namugongo Social Centre (Uganda) is both a nutrition centre and a school under the mango trees, or why the RomAmor Association (Italy), which began by distributing hot meals, now deals with inclusion,

intervenes in emergencies related to the cold weather by distributing blankets, collects and distributes over-the-counter medicines, and encourages the reintegration of migrants into the social fabric.

These are activities that did not originate around a table, and not necessarily from professionals in the field, but from people who, using all their resources, try hard to find concrete answers to the needs of their brothers and sisters. You can see this in the nutrition centre in Man (Ivory Coast), where some women, in seeing dying children, wanted to “give a smile to Baby Jesus”, despite their limited means.

And in Chile, in relation to the cry of those who suffer, the volunteers felt they had to open their hearts and provide concrete help to those who were going through difficult times due to the pandemic, by supporting a soup kitchen.

After a while, this gesture attracted other people who offered their help. In these activities, it is not only what you do that counts, but also how you do it. They write: “Cooking together becomes an experience of listening to each other, lived with joy, amid chatter and laughter. This creates a family atmosphere, where we perceive the presence of the Divine among us.”



Temuwe Agricultural Complex Centro Nutrizionale (CNSF)

Where: Burkina Faso, Bangassi, Boromo

From subsistence to sustainability. Fr. Expedit, who went to Ireland for his Master's degree in Business, founded an agricultural school in 2015. In partnership with a group of sponsors in Ireland, the school helps the local population to be more self-sufficient in food production. The 2024 projects included fish farming, expanding the chicken coop, corn production and building a well.

Olla solidaria

Where: Chile

Direct beneficiaries: 70–80 persons/month
(families and homeless people)

Indirect beneficiaries: volunteers; parish community

Established in 2020 during the pandemic, the soup kitchen started its activities in a Lutheran school in Valparaíso. In 2022, support moved to Viña del Mar, to a very vulnerable and needy neighbourhood.

Where: Ivory Coast, Man

It is enough to listen to the mothers who go back to the centre to present their children after being healed. The effects of the CNSF are clear ever since, in 1998, a group of women led by the Muslim organizer, Maman Bintou, began to combat infant mortality caused by malnutrition. It is not food that is lacking, but the ability to know how to nourish people. Today, the centre devotes itself to training mothers in the villages, to producing flour to feed malnourished children, to providing treatment for children and raising awareness among young people at school about the consequences of early pregnancy.

Social Cooperative “Casa di Chiara”

Where: Italy, Crotone

To raise awareness of the problem of food waste among as many people as possible, the Casa di Chiara [Chiara's House] hostel invites its guests to collaborate in the Zero Hunger programme and therefore not to waste the food provided for breakfast.

RomAmoR ONLUS

Where: Italy, Rome

Direct beneficiaries: persons who receive
800 meals per week

Being a bridge between the street and the world on the other side: this is one of the objectives of the association founded in 2006 at the initiative of Dino Impagliazzo (1930-2021, Honor of Merit of the Italian Republic as a “hero of our times”). He spent his life for the benefit of the poor of Rome. RomaAmoR helps homeless people, the elderly, migrants, people with disabilities, nomads, ex-prisoners and the poor in general, who wander around the Italian capital's railway stations. Over time, RomAmoR has sought to restore dignity to marginalized people by fostering relationships based on fraternity, sincere listening and mutual respect. This approach has enabled the association to become a stable point of reference for those living on the margins of society.



Arcobaleno Nutrition Centre

Where: Uganda, Kampala, Namugongo

The school under the mango trees

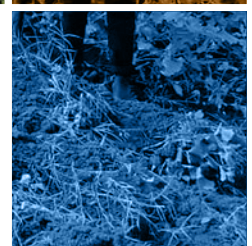
The Arcobaleno [Rainbow] Nutrition Centre and Nursery School was established in 1999 with the aim of providing education to vulnerable children at all levels, from nursery and primary school to secondary school and university. From the outset,

there was an influx of families from the villages seeking work and a better life in Uganda's capital, Kampala. However, many of these families were unable to support themselves and lived in

precarious conditions, lacking the basic necessities such as food, clothing and shelter. This forced some children to live on the streets in search of food. The majority of them were malnourished, sick and some were homeless.

In their search for sustenance, the children found a safe haven at the Focolare Centre, where there were several fruit trees, such as mango trees, which they could freely enjoy. This gave them the opportunity to make friends and share their difficulties. This is how the first school under the mango trees was born, dedicated to teaching children how to read and write.

Today, the project offers study spaces, school supplies, food and healthcare through the Zia Angelina Health Centre, catering to vulnerable children aged between 3 and 5, at the Arcobaleno Nursery School and Nutrition Centre.



Highlighted Impact

Key words that summarize the change generated in places and in people



DIGNITY
People who were marginalized **become newly aware of their dignity** and their ability to give in their turn: there is a real change in mentality that stems from a perspective that has been able to see and recognize the supreme dignity of each individual.



RECIPROCITY
Dynamics of reciprocity are generated: those who are respected and loved are in turn prompted to respect and love others, but also – on the part of the educators – there is an awareness that they learn a great deal from the children and young people they work with, an awareness that they learn from each other and together.



DREAMS COME TRUE
The fulfilment of dreams: allow children and young people to see that their dreams can come true. It gives substance to concrete hope in their lives.



PATIENCE
Patience and perseverance are needed because the transformation we are aiming for is profound, and we cannot expect to see results in a short time. But in the end, they are there: people flourish and the social fabric becomes more “fraternal”.



BUILDING SOCIAL NETWORKS
The work generated by these projects creates bonds, connects different people together and brings out the richness of diversity. It is like a collective activity that multiplies and generates new life.



YOUTH LEADERSHIP
Young people start *working in the area*, taking on responsibilities and active roles, thanks to the opportunities they have been given. They take risks, make commitments and become protagonists of change.



TRAIETTORIE-CHE-CAMBIANO
Si spezza ciclo di povertà: in molti casi gli studenti che escono da queste scuole riescono negli studi, nel lavoro, nella vita e rimangono in contatto con la scuola, a volte tornano come educatori, a volte come “benefattori”, spesso per condividere gioie e dolori, in una relazione di famiglia che resta nel tempo.

HEALTH

Then make a pact with them: promise one another constant and perpetual love, so that the Conqueror of the world may be always among you, ... run with your friends to visit Christ in them, to comfort them, to reveal to them that the love of God is close to them and watches over them.



Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 3:
Health and Well-being

Laudato si':
Health and Integral Well-being

Fratelli tutti:
Globalization of Human Rights

Siluva Civil Association

Where: Argentina, Villa Elisa (La Plata)

Direct beneficiaries: 57 young people with disabilities

Context

What is now a recognized basic service in many parts of the world – care centres for people with disabilities – was a complete novelty in Argentina in 1995. The Siluva Civil

Association day care centre was the first facility in the city of Villa Elisa to offer support to young people with cognitive disabilities, overcoming social stigma.

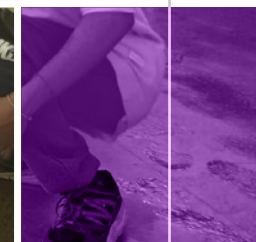
Experiences of Life

“Thirty years ago, in Villa Elisa, there were no day care centres for young people with intellectual disabilities. Many of them remained

alone in their homes, hidden away. At the beginning of this course of action, we would get into our cars every day and go to visit them and offer them a space of their own, where they could grow, experience fulfilment and make friends.

We offered their families a place of welcome, giving them support in obtaining benefits and asserting their rights. Over the years, society has made progress in recognizing their rights and creating spaces reserved to people in this condition. Nevertheless, every day, Siluva welcomes new participants, who have often been “rejected” by other institutions. And precisely here, at Siluva, they find an environment where they feel at home.

Responding to the most complex and difficult situations, even amidst economic difficulties, has always been our primary objective.”



TAGS

ACCOMPANIMENT_PRISONERS
WELCOMING_MIGRANTS
INTERCULTURAL_DIALOGUE
SOCIAL_INCLUSION
PEACE_RIGHTS
VOLUNTEERING

Accompaniment at the Fazenda da Esperança

Where: Argentina, Carhué (Buenos Aires)
Direct beneficiaries: 30/40 young people per year, undergoing processes of rehabilitation from drug/alcohol addiction and other problems; 180/190 people assisted; 700 students have been met in schools through awareness-building activities

The Fazenda da Esperança [Farm of Hope] is an institution originating from a charism in the Catholic Church that promotes the rehabilitation of people struggling with addiction, by offering them a change in lifestyle. "With a team from the Focolare Movement in Salliqueló, Pigüé, and the surrounding areas, we support institutional life and the life of those who are following this process, through various projects and activities (days of spirituality of unity, street football/fair play football, socioeconomic support, integration and assistance in the Living Hope Groups - GEV)." The Fazenda was founded in 1983 in Brazil by Friar Hans Stapel and Nelson Giovannelli. At present, it has centres in several countries. The focolares, when present, are often frontline animators, sharing its spirit.



Focolare
 nella Fazenda
 da Esperança
 di Guaratinguetá

Street football/fair play football has its origin at the Fazenda da Esperança, thanks to a young man who, at the end of his year-long recovery programme, offered his assistance to a group of volunteers who were dreaming of starting a sports project.

Social Medical Centre (CMS)

Where: Ivory Coast, Man
Direct beneficiaries: 663 children aged 0 to 4; 686 children aged 5 to 14; 503 young people aged 15 to 24; 2,460 young people and adults aged 25 to 49; and 3,253 adults aged 50 and over

Founded as a dispensary in 1998, this health centre made an existential leap in the thick of the region's civil conflict. It was 2002, and Mariapolis Victoria was trying to respond to the needs of the many refugees—of all ethnic groups—and the residents of the city of Man, whose health facilities had been closed. On the front line, there was a Spanish focolarino doctor who chose not to leave the country. Trust was built more and more, and today the Centre also employs local doctors and nurses. Services offered: medical consultations, nursing care, clinical

observation, biological analysis laboratory, pharmacy, rehabilitation, ophthalmology, cardiology, electrocardiogram (ECG), ultrasound, HIV screening and management. Even the Nutrition Centre (see page 52) is connected to the Medical Centre.

A new inpatient wing has recently been inaugurated, where several bed spaces are available to make it easier for people who have to travel long distances to get to the clinic.

Chiara Luce Residential Community for Pregnant Women and Mothers with Dependent Children and an Educational Community for Minors

Where: Italy, Lecce
Direct beneficiaries: approximately 50 persons, including mothers and children, and minors

www.salentopportunita.it/comunita-chiara-luce

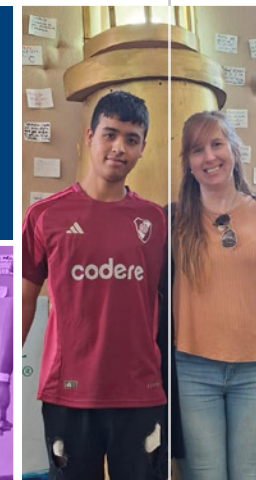
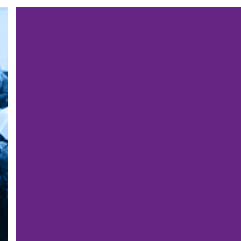
To offer a protective environment that is meaningful from the point of view of relationships from the very first moment of welcome: The Chiara Luce Community aims to be a place of care and protection, a vital space where everyone can find an individualized welcome. The guests at the centre are mothers with children from wounded families, or minors accompanied by social services or the Juvenile Court.

For this reason, the quality of the welcome is the central point: the focus is on respect and the acknowledgement of each person, with their rich and sometimes painful inner world, of people with "burdensome" personal and family life stories.

Zia Angelina Health Centre

Where: Uganda, Namugongo (Kampala)
Direct beneficiaries: 49,052 people served out of the 62,165 persons who need this service in the area

The medical centre, located near the Uganda Martyrs Shrine, operates under the auspices of the Uganda Catholic Medical Bureau and in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. It has been operating since the year 2000 and is managed according to the principles of the Economy of Communion. Services offered: receiving and caring for outpatients, hospitalization for seriously ill patients, maternity care with prenatal and postnatal care, laboratory services, dental services, radiology services (X-rays and ultrasound), pharmacy, HIV and tuberculosis services, consultations, immunization programmes, awareness building programmes in the parishes, participation in health days, and assistance to people passing by.



SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Having consoled, helped, enlightened and made happy those who were social outcasts, you have laid the foundations to build the new city.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 11:
Sustainable Cities and Communities

Laudato si':
Integral formation and education;
Communication, culture and beauty;
Active citizenship and participation;
Care for the Common Home

Fratelli tutti:
No one can face life in isolation



Activities: energy saving (LED, paper reduction), recycling, food waste reduction, choice of ethical banking, care of indoor and outdoor green spaces. Organization of educational meetings on ecology and sustainable behaviour.

Focolare Centre for Unity

Where: Great Britain, Welwyn Garden City

The Focolare Centre for Unity, located in the United Kingdom, is a centre for spiritual formation, ecumenical dialogue, and hospitality. It offers rooms for meetings, retreats, cultural and educational events, hosting religious groups, public bodies and associations. In 2024, it organized a major ecumenical art exhibition, 205 events for local groups, support for Ukrainian refugees, and environmental activities. It is a good example of dialogue and unity between different communities.

Dialog Hotel Eckstein

Where: Switzerland, Baar

Founded in 1976 in Baar, Switzerland, as a centre for meetings, today the Dialog Hotel Eckstein is more than a hotel: it is a place to meet people and build relationships, a sustainable facility that welcomes families, youth groups, religious, and lay people. Its vocation is rooted in the charism of unity, making it a space where inclusiveness, dialogue between cultures, and care for the environment turn into concrete experiences of fraternity. It is the first hotel in the Canton of Zug to have obtained the "Swisstainable – leading" certification, a sign of a commitment consistent with the values of the Focolare Movement.



The kitchen mainly serves regional Swiss products that are seasonal and homemade. There are no bananas, but apples or apricots, and instead of orange juice, breakfast includes locally produced apple and grape juices. The hotel participates in the "OK:GO" initiative of the "Switzerland without barriers" Association. The old dining room has been transformed into a modern, attractive restaurant with excellent acoustics. Recycled PET was used for the sound-absorbing ceiling panels. The room dividers and table linen are also made from the same material.

Loppiano Experience International Little Town

Where: Italy, Loppiano

Direct beneficiaries: 15,240 visitors (2024); permanent residents are: young people; families, children, religious, consecrated persons, seminarians, priests

A visit or stay in Loppiano may have profound effects. Those who participate in the life of this little town often experience a time of reflection on the meaning of their lives, rediscovering spiritual and relational values that inspire more authentic choices. The experience of community life promotes self-knowledge, personal growth, and the building of fraternal relationships based on mutual respect and listening. It also offers a broader perspective on the common good and social responsibility, stimulating a real and conscious commitment in the context of one's own life.

Experiences of Life

“The interdisciplinary approach of the courses at Sophia University Institute truly fascinated me. It makes you look at the person as a whole” (university student). “Now that I’m going home, I want to seriously live the Golden Rule (‘Do unto

as you would have them do unto you’). Here, I saw it put into practice” (scout). “I was really struck by Ciro’s experience of caring for what has been discarded and the projects he does that give life back to what was lost. When I go home, I want to reach out to the people who are rejected who may pass by me every day” (high school student). “I discovered a new sense of community. Here, everything is extensive, inclusive, it embraces a city. I am taking away a whole new way of seeing everything, all people and things” (a teacher). “Here, difficulty is both a starting and a meeting point” (an adult).

“I think Loppiano is truly a ‘corner of Paradise’ because visitors, young people especially, have an experience of a living Gospel that will help them for the rest of their lives and allow them to relate to their neighbours, their work, and their families in a constructive and welcoming way that is consistent with the Gospel” (a catechist). “The experiences of the Gospel lived out help us change ourselves and those around us” (an elderly person). “We arrived with the impression that we were living

in the past. Loppiano is in the open countryside. We leave with the conviction that we have been in the future” (official delegation of Members of the South Korean Parliament).



Mariapolis Lia – Little town

Where: Argentina, O’Higgins

Direct beneficiaries: about 90 permanent residents + 36 young temporary residents involved in the little town’s projects; schools, religious communities, families; 12 countries represented

The formation programme offered to the young people is not just a study programme: it is a journey that touches the deepest questions – one’s identity, vocation, meaning of life – and prepares them to become builders of dialogue. Life, work, study, and living together merge into a daily experience that translates Chiara Lubich's charism into real actions, forming people who are capable of thinking and acting in support of universal fraternity. Here, diversity is not an obstacle but a treasure: welcoming others, their cultures, and their life stories becomes an opportunity to experience unity in diversity. The fruits can be seen: lives transformed, courageous choices, decisions to dedicate oneself to God and to others. Each year, a participatory evaluation system—with quarterly moments of discernment shared between young people and mentors—helps them grow in three key areas: work, theoretical training, and community life. The adults also take the challenge, through councils and assemblies, to rethink together the significance of the little town and define new perspectives.

A team of experts and teachers accompanies the young people with an integral formation that combines the spiritual, anthropological, social, and cultural dimensions, enriched by workshops on the challenges of our time. It is not just a learning experience but a life-changing one.

“El Pelicano” Mariapolis Centre

Where: Uruguay, Montevideo

The Mariapolis Centre, “El Pelicano”, has been converted from an event centre into a university residence for students coming from all over Uruguay and other countries. It offers a family, a formative, and intercultural environment with community life, shared commitment, spiritual guidance, and youth leadership. It also hosts formation courses and events open to the public.

“Seven years ago, we began converting our walnut orchard into one of organic production, and after the pandemic, we started cultivating eight plots of an agroecological garden for educational purposes. We are part of the ‘Laudato si’ network, as well as of the agroecological farmers’ network and the Agroecology Network of Uruguay. In 2023-2024, the educational-ecological PROJECT “EL PELICANO CREA” offered to elementary school children, gardening workshops, environmental education, and the identification of birds and plants present at the centre. We are currently preparing educational panels, a tree identification trail, and the planting of some trees to preserve the native flora.”

ENVIRONMENT AND CREATION

**He is the one who has made the stars,
who guides the destiny of all time.**

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 12:
Responsible consumerism and production

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 13:
Addressing climate change

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 15:
Life on the earth

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 6:
Clean water, sanitation and hygiene

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 7:
Affordable and clean energy

Laudato si':
Contemplation of creation; community response to environmental and social crises

Fratelli tutti:
Everything is connected. Pandemics and other calamities in history

“We are committed to guaranteeing the ecological sustainability of our structures and activities ... We want to dedicate ourselves to forming an environmental conscience that leads to more sustainable lifestyles.”

Ecological conversion is one of the commitments taken up by the Focolare Movement during its 2021 General Assembly. *In response to this urgent need, the Focolare EcoPlan was formulated*, an ecological plan within our communities to bring about change and make our lives and activities more sustainable. Most of the actions described in this 2024 Community Report can also be looked at from this perspective. In this section, we try to offer a cross-cutting interpretation in response to the cry of the earth, the cry of the poor, and the cry of the new generations, aware that the level of environmental awareness varies from one country to another, and that actions proposed must be understood according to the different socio-cultural contexts.

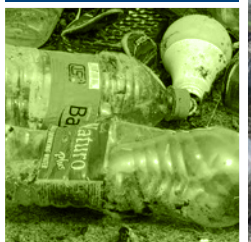
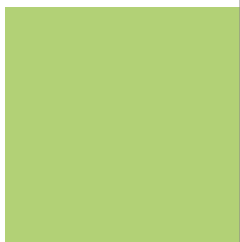
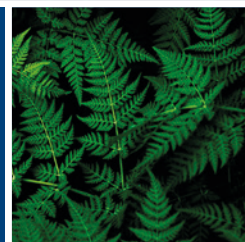
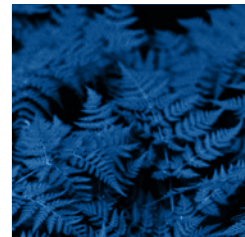
Care for the environment becomes an integral part of education, training, and teaching activities. **Waste sorting and recycling activities** in Argentina, in the Siluva association, recycling activities promoted among young people and their families, and the equitable use of electricity. The children and young people visiting the Focolare's little town, Mariapolis Lia,

TAGS

ECOLOGICAL_AGRICULTURE
ENVIRONMENTAL_EDUCATION
RENEWABLE_ENERGY
WASTE_MANAGEMENT
SUSTAINABLE_PRODUCTION
SUSTAINABLE_DEVELOPMENT
ECOLOGICAL_TRANSITION

are introduced to an ongoing ecological project, showing them the solar power system, the recycling centre, and doing short practical tasks, including moments of reflection based on Laudato Si'. Over the last ten years, an Ecological Fair has been organized. It is a space for the dissemination and presentation of ecological projects in the Southern Cone and in Buenos Aires.

At the **Mariapolis Centre in Paraguay**, initiatives of this type range from reducing the use of plastic, sorting of rubbish and recycling, preventing food waste, to the Zero Waste project, which involves the entire neighbourhood. Recently, the town council, together with a business, launched the *Riciclaton* campaign among students, which aims to recycle objects that can be transformed into raw materials for new products: with 689 kilos collected, the Mariapolis Centre ranked at the top of the list. Environmental education is also integrated into the educational programme at the **Arcobaleno Nutrition Centre**



and Nursery in Uganda. At the **carpentry workshop in Cainta, in the province of Rizal, Philippines**, the vocational training programme includes lessons on household management, safe machine operation and security and the environment. The **P. Quintard Centre in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo**, provides training in good agricultural practices and sustainable trades.

Waste disposal: At the *Zia Angelina Medical Centre* in Uganda, non-sanitary waste is burned in a well-built incinerator, while sanitary waste is collected by a contractor and taken to a designated disposal area. As part of the *Greening Africa Together* initiative, NASSO is collaborating with the Ndejje University and the Uganda Martyrs University to develop waste management solutions and promote alternative energy sources such as *briquettes* (solid biofuels). These collaboration activities support research and practical solutions so as to reduce environmental impact while promoting community development.

The CASOBU association in Burundi organizes courses on household waste management and promotes awareness-building in hygiene and sanitary services. It also works to protect the groundwater through the construction of ecological toilets, and it trains communities in the safe use of

human waste as fertilizer, without health risks. The composting of agricultural residues and the recycling of organic materials are also done at the P. Quintard Centre in Goma.

Family gardens, community gardens and school gardens are created at the *Fiore* Educational Centre in Guatemala, at the *Unisol* Foundation in Bolivia, at the *Sol Naciente* School in Colombia, at the *Welcome* Project in the state of Parà, Brazil. Recycling workshops, urban gardens, and environmental education are offered at the **Centro de Atención Integral Hornos – Las Águilas** in Mexico. In Loppiano, the *Laudato si' Ring* offers meditative walks in nature, fully appreciating the Tuscan landscape.

Energy consumption and conversion to solar power: installation in the Mariapolis Lia (see BOX) as well as in the three little towns in Brazil, in Mariapolis El Diamante and in the Mariapolis Centre Pietra Angolare in Baar, Switzerland. Here, in Baar, as a result of an energy study, the roof was insulated and a solar power system was installed. In addition, the decision was made not to install air conditioning in the rooms, which are instead equipped with electric fans. At the Mariapolis Centre Luminosa in Madrid, Spain, in addition to the installation of solar panels, the heating system was changed, and the walls were insulated to reduce energy consumption. There are projects for conversion to solar power in Brazil and the Philippines as well.

An **agroecological project in Maceiò, Brazil**, has become an experience of human development with the farming families of the Zumbi dos Palmares settlement, a rural area in the town of Branquinha. About 20 families (100 people) have become autonomous and have achieved a better quality of life, as a result of agroecological cultivation without pesticides and of training courses in the production of sweets and fruit pulps, handicrafts and bee farming, as well as in leadership and entrepreneurship. An agroecological association has also been founded, which is now a point of reference in the region. Of these families, three have model plots - used for learning, visits, and ecotourism - and are protagonists at the UFAL and the Piazza del Centenario organic fairs, consequently increasing the family income by about 80%.

Reducing plastic use: in addition to recycling campaigns in various countries, drinking water fountains connected directly to the water supply have been installed in Crotone (at the Casa di Chiara Hostel, which houses women who have suffered abuse, Ukrainian refugees, and small family units).

In Vibo Valentia (Italy), the *Insieme per il Bene Comune [Together for the Common Good]* Association participates in initiatives to raise awareness in caring for the local area, such as cleaning some of the roads along the local tourist route. Similarly, the Austrian association *Jugend für eine geeinte Welt [Youth for a United World]* contributes to the conservation of the environment and creation, by integrating ecological and sustainable practices into its activities.

Art and culture: music also becomes a powerful vehicle for communicating ecological conversion. **Gen Verde** international band, from Loppiano, Italy, has composed several songs which were included in their concert tours **Start Here and Now, Turn Around** (2020), **Uirapuru** (2015).

Gen Fuoco, a band from Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, recalls in its songs the beauty of nature, ecological responsibility and respect for creation. One song composed in 2024 is addressed to the nations of the world, urging them to take care of the environment, while an album is being prepared for 2025 with a particular focus on this theme.

The publishing house **Ciudad Nueva** (Argentina) dedicates a monthly section to ecology, edited by Eco-One (the Focolare network of professionals committed to the ecological cause), with articles to raise awareness on respect for the environment, while **NetOne Cono Sud** is dedicated to disseminating ecological themes through positive accounts on climate change and youth engagement. **Focolare Media**, a North American project which has a cultural impact, has developed this theme in events such as *“A Hearth for the Human Family”* (2024, Texas, USA) and has initiated a reflection on the connection between media, environment, and spirituality.

Oxygen for the planet: “Go Green” was an event organized for the children of the *Ilanthalir* home (Tamil Nadu, India) and other *Ilanthalir* centres, with the aim of raising awareness about environmental protection and the conservation of natural resources. During the event, the dangers and causes of

global warming were highlighted, followed by the **planting of young trees**. At the Arcobaleno nursery school (Namugongo, Uganda), tree planting is an educational activity designed to instil environmental awareness from an early age.

Mariapolis Lia

"Since 2015, the goal of Mariapolis Lia has been to become an ecological little town. In the field of energy, we are promoting sustainable habits and renewable technologies to reduce our dependence on non-renewable sources. Thanks to a solar power system, we are moving towards energy self-sufficiency, thus reducing our carbon footprint. We have made significant progress in the ecological conversion of our inhabitants. Through meetings, workshops, and community activities, we have promoted environmental awareness and the adoption of more sustainable and eco-friendly practices. A waste sorting collection system has minimized the amount of waste sent to garbage dumps, and compost is prepared in bins installed in every house. We have opened a collection centre where materials are distributed throughout the area for processing and recycling. An agricultural transition process is underway to adopt more ecological and sustainable practices. In small agroecological farms, we promote the use of eco-friendly methods of cultivation. It is a process that we want to continue in order to make better use of our resources."

NASSO Uganda, socio-economic programme: training in food and agriculture and urban agriculture, beneficiaries are introduced to eco-friendly farming methods. P. Quintard Centre, Goma: good agricultural practices preserve soil fertility, reduce the use of chemical pesticides, and reduce water pollution to a minimum.

Pag-asa's leadership and social responsibility training programme includes sessions on environmental justice and the role of young people in protecting creation. Students are encouraged to reflect on the climate crisis, waste management, and the ecological impact of human choices, in line with Pope Francis' call in *Laudato si'* to be stewards of the Earth.

Sustainable relief operations: Through its *Herohan (Becoming Heroes)* and *PAGtulong (Helping)* programmes, Pag-asa ensures that relief and reconstruction operations in the aftermath of typhoons are environmentally sensitive: by using sustainable materials whenever possible; reducing waste during packaging and distribution; rebuilding houses in safer areas.

Health programmes that promote hygiene and environmental awareness: preventative measures through personal hygiene, use of clean water, sanitation, and household waste management.

Eco-friendly partnerships and corporate social responsibility (CSR) events: minimal use of plastic packaging when distributing food or gifts; donation of reusable materials and supplies; involvement of volunteers in clean-up operations during set-up and dismantling of events.

Values of simplicity and stewardship of Creation: Pag-asa promotes a lifestyle based on simplicity, gratitude and responsible use among the students and their families.

Decent housing after disasters: the *Herohan* programme prioritizes reconstruction over relocation, strengthening structures to withstand future storms and promoting adaptation to climate variations, while preserving community cohesion.



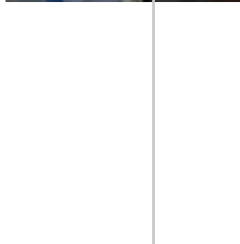
Focolari
EcoPlan



Greening
Africa
Together

Pag-asa Social Centre, Tagaytay, Philippines

Although still in the early stages of its environmental action, Pag-asa (Hope) Social Centre is laying the groundwork for a more sustainable, resilient, and community-led response to climate change.



Projects with generative power

Interview with Juan Esteban Belderrain

He coordinates social investment programmes, supporting networks and projects in the fields of education, human rights, environmental sustainability, and intercultural dialogue. He works with civil society organizations, local communities, and church organizations to promote the common good and systemic transformation for the benefit of the most vulnerable in Latin America.



Juan Esteban Belderrain, an Argentinean living in São Paulo, Brazil, works in the area of international cooperation for development.

What are the distinctive features of the educational and social action that you have studied and taken ahead, which is deeply rooted in the spirituality of the Focolare Movement?

What is most striking to me, since my earliest experiences, is the generative power of projects inspired by the charism of unity. They do not come from a strategy, but from a radical choice to live the Gospel. The first root is tangible love, lived in extreme circumstances.

It is not just a matter of responding to a need, but of embodying a spirituality that listens to the cries of the least and of the earth, that welcomes their wounds and allows itself to be converted by these. It is the opposite of a welfare approach: it is a transformative practice, where mutual recognition opens the way to paths of shared liberation.

Economy of Communion

The Economy of Communion (EoC), founded by Chiara Lubich in May 1991 in São Paulo (Brazil), involves entrepreneurs, labourers, managers, consumers, savers, citizens, scholars, and economic operators, all of whom are committed at various levels to promoting an economic practice and a culture based on communion, gratuitousness, and reciprocity, proposing and living an alternative lifestyle to the one which dominates the capitalist system.



For this reason, the second distinctive feature is the building of deep relationships. In these projects, the roles of giver and receiver are constantly interchanged. A community is created in which each person is an active participant, jointly responsible for change. This approach differs greatly from models based on the dialectical opposition between categories - those who help and those who have to be helped, those who possess knowledge and those who lack it, those who have power and those who suffer under it - which, despite good intentions, can end up fuelling social conflict. The social action born of the charisma of unity does not eliminate conflict, but passes through it, generating communion where there is division.

Finally, these projects do not become isolated. They seek to grow into a network, they nourish themselves on the “we” and are based on the trust that human bonds, when they are characterized by radical and authentic love, make the impossible possible. It is not a question of strategy, but of faith and coherence.

Movement for Unity in Politics

An international workshop for political action among politicians elected at various institutional levels, or activists in different political parties and movements, diplomats, civil servants, political scientists, pro-active citizens, young people interested in the life of their city and major world issues, and those who wish to exercise their right and duty to contribute to the common good.



What kind of transformation have you seen in people and society as a consequence of these social projects? How do you think this transformation can be recognized or measured?

In the social projects inspired by the charisma of unity, profound transformations can be observed in people's lives: actual, visible life changes in very different contexts. Men and women who rediscover their dignity, rebuild bonds, and reactivate their desire to contribute to society. This impact is precious and indispensable: it restores hope and restarts human processes that had often been interrupted.

But I believe that there is an even greater potential which deserves to be developed. Social projects will have a more structural impact if they are better integrated with two fundamental initiatives of the charisma of unity: the Economy of Communion (EoC) and the Movement for Unity in Politics (MUP). The EoC and the MUP are, in essence, the channels that offer these local experiences the possibility of extending their activities into economic and political systems, preventing them from being limited to small local responses. They are instruments of systematic projection, which allow projects to become also drivers of cultural, structural, and institutional change.

On the other hand, the EoC and the MUP also benefit greatly from direct contact with social projects. The latter help them to remain rooted in real life, to discern authentic priorities, and to plan their agendas according to the deepest wounds of our societies.

Recognizing transformation, therefore, requires a dual perspective: grasping the changes in people's lives while also catching a glimpse of the signs of connection with a broader horizon. When these networks are strengthened, what seemed to be peripheral begins to have an impact at the centre. And the margins become a place of revelation.



FRATERNITY

After that look further afield and tell everyone that every neighbour, rich or poor, beautiful or ugly, gifted or not, is Christ who passes by.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 1:
Defeat poverty

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5:
Promote gender equality
(empowering women)

Laudato si':
Common good, social ethics,
network of communion and belonging

Fratelli tutti:
Life exists where there is bonding,
communion, fraternity



The projects that have been implemented form a structured and responsible network for living closeness. They are directed toward promoting the dignity of the person, by providing food security, access to water, protection of displaced persons, programmes for basic education and training, microcredit, digital and linguistic literacy, inclusion of people with disabilities, support for families and minors living in poverty, giving value to the skills of the individual, rejection of all discrimination regarding caste or religion.

The approach that has been adopted is not limited to social inclusion, but aims to generate meaningful relationships based on solidarity, empathy and fraternity. In this context, “need” is transformed into “relationship” and “fragility” into “shared resources”. This process activates dynamics of reciprocity that favour the development of fraternity among all.

All of these projects share a strategic objective, which is to accompany those who are vulnerable, helping them to achieve economic and social autonomy, through the use of appropriate tools, targeted resources and training courses. The aim is to strengthen their resilience as individuals and as a group by promoting active participation in their own personal development as well as that of their community. In view of achieving universal fraternity, this commitment translates into viable support for those in need and the promotion of a culture of mutual assistance.

TAGS

INTERCULTURAL_DIALOGUE
BASIC_EDUCATION
HUMAN_FORMATION
SOCIAL_INCLUSION
FIGHT_AGAINST_POVERTY
PEACE_RIGHTS
PREVENTION
PRIMARY_HEALTH
LOCAL_DEVELOPMENT



“Generators” of communion: 2024 OPLA report

Numerous places in the world continue to experience great suffering, and unfortunately many of them have already been forgotten. We tend to focus on one tragedy at a time as presented by the media and also because we become overwhelmed, and so a catastrophe today immediately makes us forget that of yesterday. As always, it is those who are weakest, those experiencing so many various forms of poverty, who suffer the consequences.

Approximately € 670,000 was **assigned by the Economy of Communion (EoC) businesses in 2024 to support activities, projects and initiatives aimed at defeating poverty.** This sum is only the amount managed by the EoC International. However, we know

that in many parts of the world there are EoC entrepreneurs, companies and associations that act directly to combat poverty in their own areas, without necessarily sending funds to EoC International.

In fact, the figures you see here may even be a fraction of everything that is being done!

With regard to integral human development and emergency projects, approximately € 380,000 was allocated to projects in Burundi, Ecuador, Syria, Brazil, Cuba, Turkey, Ukraine, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Italy, covering areas ranging from education to healthcare, from emergency aid to providing microcredit to small businesses.

There are also **projects that support individuals** that are being carried out by various EoC companies throughout the world with 394 participants geographically distributed in **Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.**

Approximately €290,000 was invested in the form of scholarships, health care, support to start-up income-generating activities, housing improvements and basic nutrition.

And that's not all! Each project has triggered a **chain of reciprocity, fraternity and commitment to a better world** that goes far beyond simple economic aid. In **Colombia**, a family that received support from the EoC decided to buy diapers and other supplies for another family in need. In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, a midwifery student convinced her entire class not to give in when an attempt was made to involve them in something corrupt. In **India**, an elderly couple donated their time being with people who are alone, so that they wouldn't feel abandoned.

For these and many other stories, visit the **EoC website**.



Asociación Civil Nuevo Sol

Where: *Argentina, Buenos Aires*

Direct beneficiaries: *about 50 people and 300 children and families*

Indirect beneficiaries: *educators; young volunteers; local communities*

Active for 20 years in vulnerable neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires, Nuevo Sol promotes social justice and active citizenship through its four community centres, soup kitchens, after-school programmes and workshops. It welcomed more than 300 children and families in 2024, offering educational, health, sports, and artistic services with an inclusive and participatory approach. It includes volunteers, educators and local networks.

Fundación Lucía

Where: *Argentina, Rosario*

Direct beneficiaries: *30 children aged 6 to 12; 20-25 young people and adult women; approximately 20 mothers; 50-60 people who live in the neighbourhood; 4-6 volunteers per day; 7-10 volunteers involved in running trade fairs*

Fundación Lucía offers a welcome, training and support to families and children living in poverty in Tucumán. Through educational, recreational, sports and cultural activities, it creates community, offers opportunities and gives hope to

people in the most vulnerable neighbourhoods. It promotes strong relationships and shared responsibility, working in partnership with public and private entities.

Experiences of Life

A story from the Arte y Vida workshop (San Miguel de Tucumán, Argentina)

My name is Marta, and since 2021 I have been running the Arte y Vida [Art and Life] workshop. But my history with this group began much earlier, when I participated as a student alongside other women from the neighbourhood. Artists and teachers generously offered us their time and expertise, teaching us how to draw, paint with acrylics, embroider in Mexican style, and even renewing items through creative recycling. After the pandemic, **I felt the desire to give back what I had received for free.** I talked about it with a volunteer from the foundation, who encouraged and supported me. Two mothers from the neighbourhood enthusiastically agreed to get involved. So we started inviting other women, and little by little the group took shape.

Last year, 25 women, young and old, participated in the workshop twice a week for three hours. Their enthusiasm was palpable. We began each meeting by rolling a cube with positive messages about values to live by, which we then tried to put into practice. From there, we shared ideas, art materials, paint brushes and dreams. We shared mate, a typical drink in some Latin American countries, and talked about our joys and sorrows. This space has become a safe haven of beauty, creativity and sisterhood.

Fundación Por Igual Más

Where: Argentina, Córdoba
Direct beneficiaries: 80 people

www.porigualmas.org

Por Igual Más promotes the full inclusion of people with disabilities through training, communication, spirituality and civic engagement. They participated in the founding of the Latin American Network for Interreligious Cooperation on Disability (RELACID). After three years of research and networking, it offers a publicly accessible list of over 4,000 institutions in every province and region of Argentina that work for people with disabilities.



Roger Cunha Rodrigues Social Centre

Where: Brazil, Manaus
Direct beneficiaries: 160 children and adolescents
Indirect beneficiaries: 50 families participated in surveys about their satisfaction with the programme

For **30 years**, this project has been operating in the community of **Ouro Verde/Coroado, in Manaus**, developing projects aimed at **children and adolescents and their families who are living in situations of social vulnerability**. The *Mesa Brasil* project combats hunger by distributing food that would otherwise be wasted, thus guaranteeing the fundamental right to food for hundreds of people. For young people, it offers practical alternatives to marginalization with the “Planning My Future” programme, which has already helped 78% of its participants to enrol in internship and apprenticeship programmes, opening the door to their first job and thus breaking the cycle of poverty. Their request for quality education is met by tutoring and personalized support, which has **reduced learning difficulties by 60%**, and with a reading project that has **sparked a love for books in 88% of children**. The violence and the lack of prospects that many young people face are tackled through sports and cultural activities that occupy their free time with transformative goals, as well as through a partnership with VEMEPA (a government agency), which offers resocialization programmes.



AACA

Where: Brazil, Recife
Direct beneficiaries: 220 children and adolescents, 186 families

www.aacarecife.org

The Association for the Support of Children and Adolescents (AACA) promotes fundamental and universal human rights - such as health, education, nutrition, sports, the right to grow up in a family, freedom and human dignity - for children and adolescents who lack resources and are in socially vulnerable situations. In pursuing this goal for over 30 years, the association has chosen as its field of action the community of **Ilha Santa Terezinha**, formerly known as **Ilha do Inferno (Hell Island)**, where approximately 4,500 families

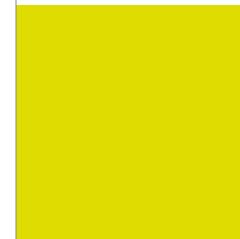
currently live, with an average of five people per family unit. The neighbourhood where they operate is one of the most violent, not only in Recife, but in the entire state of Pernambuco, as well as being a key drug distribution centre for the city of Recife. Most of the children and teens in the community are **at**

high risk, exposed to all kinds of marginalization and violence: prostitution, burglaries, drugs. There is an extremely high rate of **murders among adolescents and young adults under the age of 20**. Teens and preteens are often **recruited by traffickers** to distribute drugs, with the result that they **leave school at an early age**. AACA therefore carries out prevention and educational activities aimed at social inclusion.

Ilanthalir

Where: India, Tamil Nadu
Direct beneficiaries: 274 children; 280 women in self-help programmes; 70 girls/women in vocational training
Indirect beneficiaries: 202 children

Founded in 1997 in Tiruchirappalli, *Ilanthalir* promotes the education and empowerment of disadvantaged children and women, regardless of caste or religion. In 2024, it supported over 800 beneficiaries through educational activities, vocational training, programmes for Dalit women and environmental initiatives. It promotes interfaith solidarity and collaborates with local organizations and NGOs to promote inclusion, human dignity and sustainable development. Dalits are people who belong to the lowest strata of Indian society and are considered outcasts and “untouchables”. *Ilanthalir* focuses specifically on children from these families.



CASOBU

Where: *Burundi*

This Association was founded in Burundi in the year 2000 to respond to the poverty caused by the civil war. It offers basic services to vulnerable communities, with a focus on children, young people and women. It develops projects in education, health, microcredit, access to water and environmental sustainability, while promoting the dignity of the person, fraternity and interreligious solidarity.

Experiences of Life

During the dark years of the fratricidal war that bloodied Burundi from 1993 to 2005, also those belonging to the Focolare Movement in the country began to experience extreme poverty. Some of them who were seriously affected by this situation grouped together and formed an association to support one another and face their material difficulties together.

But in a context marked by violence and instability, even the most generous initiatives risk failure. The self-development activities, which had begun with so much enthusiasm and commitment, proved fragile and were soon overwhelmed by the chaos of the conflict.

It was then that a new, bigger idea was born: **it is not enough to help a few people, we must open up to society as a whole, also because it is the entire Burundian population that is suffering, and solidarity must go beyond the boundaries of one's own community.**

Therefore, that initial association was transformed into a full-fledged organization for development which is active in many communities, sponsoring projects and collaborating with other organizations in each area, all with just one goal: to respond together to the challenges of extreme poverty in Burundi.

Arcobaleno Association (Volunteering organization)

Where: *Italy, Milan*

Direct beneficiaries: *700+ students; 150 families (receiving food); unaccompanied minors; young adult volunteers*

www.associazione-arcobaleno.org

Since 1983, the Arcobaleno [Rainbow] Association has been promoting the integration of migrants in Milan with courses in the Italian language, computer science and culture, as well as food distribution to those in need. It works in partnership with schools and social services, supports unaccompanied foreign minors and promotes intercultural dialogue. "Love the homeland of others as your own" is the philosophy at the heart of the association.



NEST Mother and Child Welfare Centre

Where: *Pakistan*

The centre's aim is to promote access to education for marginalized Hindu and Christian religious minorities in Pakistan.

Experiences of Life

Most of our children come from families with low levels of education. Many of them are the first in their families to receive an education, and it is often the children who teach their parents to write their own names. They are also the first who no longer have to work as street sweepers or in the homes of wealthy families. To enrol in school, you need a birth certificate and civil marriage documents, which many families do not have. NEST also offers support with these administrative procedures, enabling many families to obtain official recognition as citizens before the state. Today, there are 10 of us working at the Centre, four of whom come from the same slum as our beneficiaries. NEST is a safe space for every child and young person, where they find love, respect, acceptance and the opportunity to develop their personality. In this most recent school year, five students completed the first cycle of education. Two have already found work, while one, who ranked second in his school in the state exams, wants to further his education.

El Horno las Aguilas Community Centre

Where: *Mexico, Mexico City*

Direct beneficiaries: *20 children and their families*

Indirect beneficiaries: *Educational team and the parish community*

This story also begins with an act of love. In 1984, a young woman discovered a settlement of people located in a ravine and, together with other friends inspired by the same spirit, decided to offer her support by regularly visiting the place, to be close to the people, sharing food, clothing and some basic services. The El Horno Community Centre has now become a safe haven for children and families in high-risk neighbourhoods. It offers creative workshops, educational support and formation courses on peace, ecology and spirituality. It works in synergy with the local parish and the community and has a strong impact in the areas of education, relationships and the environment.



AMU Action for a United World

www.amu-it.eu

AMU is the NGO of the Focolare Movement, founded in 1986 with the aim of promoting integral development, international cooperation, and a culture of fraternity, unity and the recognition of human rights. It operates in four areas of development: employment, health, education and emergency aid.

873 projects accomplished

14 projects in progress

294,000 beneficiaries reached in the last year

Myanmar

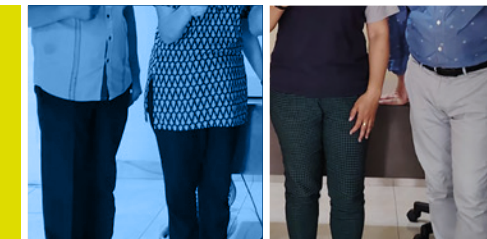
An event in Yangon for minors in the “Supporting Children at a Distance” project, a camp for adolescents focused on promoting universal fraternity. The session began by asking the 25 participants how universal fraternity can be lived. This was followed by a workshop involving the creation of a paper thermometer as a tool for measuring the degree of love and respect among people, an essential component for promoting universal fraternity.

AFN Action for New Families

Supporting children at a distance

Through the non-profit organization “Action for New Families (AFN),” the Focolare Movement has been committed to defending children's rights since the 1970s. “Supporting Children at a Distance” (formerly “Adoption at a Distance”) is one of the best-known forms of this commitment. There are over 70 projects in 46 countries around the world that operate through a network of local partners who guarantee the continuity and monitoring of the initiatives, which have reached 40,000 children and their families. One of the partner associations in this sector is AFAGO, in Brasilia, Brazil (www.afagodf.org), which operates in three main areas: informal educational activities for children and adolescents, accompaniment and support for families and promotion of a culture of peace inspired by the “art of loving.”

In 2024, it celebrated **30 years of work** and actively participated in the various phases of the 2024 **Genfest** held in Brazil, promoting a training course for children, young people and families. “Supporting Children at a Distance” is also active in countries with particularly challenging situations from a political point of view, such as **Myanmar**, where, thanks to the dedication of local representatives, the project has been active since 1995, and currently supports 260 children, or in **Vietnam**, with 258 children.



Vietnam

The children can now read and write; they relate well with their peers and no longer are wandering around the neighbourhood, thus reducing the risk of abuse. As one parent told me, no one in his family has been literate for three generations, but thanks to this school, his children and grandchildren can finally attend school.

Our greatest source of encouragement is seeing them learn a trade, find stable employment, or continue their studies in secondary school, high school or university. For many families in other places, this is a natural path, but for those living in extreme poverty, it represents an immense commitment and an extraordinary achievement.

Indonesia - A source of hope after the tsunami

In 2006, after the initial relief efforts, the Sumber Harapan social centre, which means “Source of Hope,” was established in the city of Medan. The social centre assists 150 children and their families with basic food supplies and a small amount of money for transportation.

In addition, educational activities for children and training sessions for mothers are organized. Close contact is maintained with each family, either by visiting them or simply welcoming them to the centre and talking with them.

Don't buy our bags because we are poor, but because they are beautiful

Interview with Luigino Bruni



*Professor of Political Economy
at LUMSA University in Rome*

Why is the term communion important? What does this word suggest to us?

Communion is an important word for several reasons. First of all, it is a great word to describe human relationships. From the beginning to the end of life, one of the words that best describes 'life' is communion, from the family to the various wider communities. It encompasses all the positive dimensions of life in common: mutual love, trust, reciprocity, which are all associated with a good life.

Even friendship and work can be understood as forms of communion, whether they are civil or lay. We find it in law: spouses choose either to hold their property in common or separately. It is also central in Christianity: not only is it a word for the Eucharist, but it touches the very heart of humanism and of the Christian message. The word "Church" itself can be translated as 'communion.' In the Focolare Movement, communion is at the heart of our charism: 'that they all may be one' (Jn 17:21).

There is also a more specific reason: when Chiara Lubich launched a new economic project in Brazil in 1991, it was given the name **Economy of Communion**. Since then, it has been difficult to talk about economics in the Focolare Movement without talking about communion. This economic experience has given a new meaning to the word 'communion'. There is a Focolare understanding of communion before and after 1991. Making a budget in the Focolare Movement that relates to economy, sharing and unity requires the use of the term 'communion'. That is why I am not surprised, but rather I am happy to find it in this document as well!

It is certainly difficult to summarize 34 years of the Economy of Communion in a few words. Looking at the current situation and recent developments in the Economy of Communion, what are its most significant aspects?

The most beautiful and important thing is that after 34 years we are still here, living the EoC and talking about it as something alive.

For example, in Korea, in November 2024, a major event was held that showed the vitality of the Korean EoC businesses, such as the Sung Sim Dang bakery, as well as showcasing many other businesses around the world. I remember when I went to Daejeon (Korea) and arrived at the train station, I was struck to see a line of people waiting to buy pastries and cakes at the Economy of Communion bakery located right inside the city's central train station, one of the largest in Korea. The vitality of the EoC has changed over the years, even geographically. A few years ago, the Philippines was a beacon of experiences, but today the EoC is more vibrant in Korea, Brazil and Italy, where it remains a viable and important project.

In some African countries, new and beautiful initiatives have come to life, where until 2011 there was nothing. We are also in the third generation of the EoC. Today, the international commission is made up of young people in their thirties, with people from all over the world, including Africa, Korea, Brazil and Europe. This alone is a sign that Chiara Lubich's prophecy, her

invitation to change the economy, did not remain a flash in the pan that lasted only as long as the founder's lifetime, but it continues and is renewed; it changes, because life is evolution.



The Lionello Industrial Park, in Loppiano where I currently live, is more sustainable and generative today than when it was founded twenty years ago. It houses the School of Civil Economy, the headquarters of 'The Economy of Francesco' and about twenty other entities. An international market for many new and used items - Mercamondo - has just opened. It has chosen to come to Lionello as a site for its business, bringing other people, new ideas and life, because it is life that matters, which expresses itself in ever new forms.

The Economy of Communion began without much scientific reflection at the beginning, and for this reason it could have been very fragile; it did not originate in a university research centre. It arose from the intuition of a mystic and from many people of good will who helped her, and from the amazing generosity of entrepreneurs. Yet this simple formula, backed by the charisma of unity, was able to regenerate itself, to die and rise again in many places.

Then came the theoretical development..

Yes, Chiara Lubich's idea initially attracted a good number of academics in the field of economics. In the past, many alternative economic projects have been proposed, but not all of them attracted scholars. This has been one of the most beautiful contributions of the EoC. Over the years, it has generated categories and concepts that have been taken up by many scholars outside of the Focolare Movement. If today people are speaking about an economy of reciprocity, happiness, gift, gratuitousness and civil economy, it is partly

due to the work done by the EoC, which also co-generated the 'The Economy of Francesco'. Businesses or projects that are autonomous and independent have come together with a sense of belonging and gratitude. For me, this is the most important sign, beyond the content itself - the capacity to evolve and develop a new understanding of its own identity. The prophetic power of the EoC lies in its original intuition: Chiara did not limit herself to a project of philanthropy or altruism in order to obtain funds and resources. In the effort to rethink the reality of capitalism and to give dignity to the poor and value to communion, she felt she had to address businesses directly, since they are the main institutions in a capitalist economy. She asked them to question themselves about the central purpose of their business - the destination of their profits. The prophetic message of the EoC will always be this: not changing marginal aspects of the economy but focussing on the very heart of the system.

Communion and poverty: we often talk about “defeating poverty”, but you distinguish between poverty and destitution. How can living “communion” contribute to a different approach to poverty?

The word 'poverty' covers a very broad spectrum, ranging from the tragedy of those who suffer poverty and do not choose it, to the happiness of those who choose it out of love, and to free those who have not chosen to live in poverty. Poverty is a powerful aspect of the Gospel; it is the soul of its humanism. If it weren't for the Gospel calling the

poor 'blessed,' the linguistic problem would not arise. Instead, poverty is the first beatitude, and that is no small thing. Jesus himself, "though he was rich, became poor." Poverty was at the centre of St. Francis' experience, and we know what that meant for the culture of Europe. Every time a great charisma has arisen in the Church, it came to life to address some new form of poverty. Therefore, when we talk about poverty today, we need to explain what kind of poverty we are talking about.



If we are referring to the poverty indicated in ‘blessed are the poor’, eliminating it would be a disaster!

There is a poverty that, if eliminated, would truly make the world poorer. Instead, there are other types of poverty that must be eliminated, and these are called ‘destitution’, ‘exclusion’ and ‘deprivation’. When speaking of charisms, great attention should be paid to the use of words. Poverty has been studied for decades, including by extraordinary lay teachers such as Nobel Prize winners Amartia Sen and Muhammad Yunus, who have taught us that poverty is a problem of the lack of capital, not of the availability of income.

People are not poor because they have no money, but because they have no access to various kinds of capital – capital in healthcare or education, in family life, in social or spiritual

relationships. It is this lack of capital that then manifests itself in a lack of income, of money. But if we focus on cash flows – that is, on money – and not on capital, people remain poor, perhaps with a little money that quickly runs out because it is spent unwisely. Any serious intervention against poverty and exclusion therefore needs to be based on capital. This is why missionaries instinctively built schools and hospitals: because they knew that poverty can be overcome through education, good health and community life. And this is also why Chiara always invited us to form ‘new people’ and to promote a different kind of culture. In the Economy of Communion, we have always worked on relationships, on communion, because the only way to hope that a person or a family can rise out of poverty and destitution is to insert them into new forms of capital – in society, in the family and in the community.

Communion is a capital good, not a consumer good: it is a ‘stock’ of relationships, of new connections, of belonging to a community. This is why that mysterious phrase I heard Ginetta Calliari say in Brazil – ‘we give to those who have already given’ – is actually very profound. It means that a poor person moves within a living community, where sharing is real, not just a flood of aid.

Because if we intervene with money for isolated people who are not involved in new relationships, often that money changes nothing, and the person remains trapped in poverty. Communion, on the other hand, is a method of **fighting poverty** and, at the same time, a horizon to strive for. It is the great alternative to just an occasional help, or to a spontaneous gesture of giving money, which is understandable, but not adequate enough. Because – and this is the point – you cannot escape poverty without relationships of communion, without entering into a network of new and generative relationships.

Fraternity and initiatives of communion: in this report, recounting the many initiatives that have arisen from living the spirituality of unity – schools, cooperatives, social projects – it emerges that these initiatives did not arise so much from the desire to “find money” for the poor, but rather from “caring” for people. How does “fraternity” fit into all this?

“Fraternity is a complex word, but I take it as a broad category, which also includes sisterhood. It is not only a Christian concept: it also belongs to the great tradition of liberal thinkers (Rawls, Sen, Sugden). It is a way of describing a relationship very close to communion, but with fundamental dimensions such as respect, attention, dignity and equality. Because you can help someone even with good intentions – giving them money or support – but that help is not necessarily fraternal.

Fraternity implies equality and reciprocity. In the logic of the Gospel and also in civil logic, freedom, equality and fraternity are linked and, when they are together, they represent true humanism.

Finally, I remember an experience in Brazil with the Meninos de Rua [street children]. There was a company in Recife, owned by Joao Bosco, called Dalla strada [From the Street] because they made bags with street children. One day, one of them said to me, “**Luigino, when you go back to Italy, tell your friends not to buy our bags because we are poor, but because they are beautiful.**” This sentence says practically everything: fraternity is respect, it is recognition of the dignity of the other person. Before looking at that person as someone who is poor, they are seen as people with value and dignity, and therefore worthy of respect.

It is not enough to say, ‘Oh those poor things!’ And then help them out of pity, or by inventing ‘odd jobs’ for them. Fraternal communion recognizes that even those who are poor have dignity and skills to offer to others, that no one is so poor that they have nothing to give. Real work is an expression of fraternity because it puts those who work on the same level as those who offer them work, and therefore requires respect, intelligence, creativity and tenacity. And it is this real work that truly transforms people’s lives, becoming [as St. Francis would say] ‘Brother work’.



MEDITERRANEAN OF PEACE AND FRATERNITY

Committing ourselves to building together a Mediterranean of fraternity that transforms differences into opportunities, that becomes a space of welcome

Mediterranean Fraternity Project MULTIPLYING MICRO-ACTIONS FOR PEACE

It is estimated that since 2014, over 30,000 migrants have lost their lives in the Mediterranean Sea (data from the Initiatives and Studies on Multi-ethnicity (ISMU) Foundation). The Gaza Strip faces the Mediterranean, to which fishermen have long been denied access, whereas their country is plunged into desperate famine. Israel, Lebanon and Syria all have coastlines along the Mediterranean and are countries that are at the centre of dramatic international conflicts. Many of the 27 member countries of the European Union face onto the Mediterranean, as well as North Africa, the Balkans, Greece and Turkey. The Mediterranean has the potential to either explode like a powder keg or to weave one of the greatest networks of

fraternity to offer the world. It is for this second option that thousands of people are working silently but tenaciously on projects to promote peace, educational and cultural initiatives, social actions, interreligious dialogue and moments of prayer, symposiums and conferences, and artistic projects.

Forty-six projects in eight countries involving over 7,500 people, mapped by the Mediterranean Fraternity working group, active in Western Europe, are moving in this direction. It is an insight into part of the rich life of fraternity that revolves around the Mediterranean Sea: not only a sad graveyard for thousands of migrants who have lost their lives seeking a better and more peaceful future beyond its shores, but also a field of action for many who are committed to ensuring that this ancient cultural area of water provides a true seed of dialogue among peoples. Some of these actions are intertwined with the larger-scale commitment involving mayors and bishops of the Mediterranean, and other networks at various levels: the commitment to a Mediterranean of peace has also been taken very seriously by the Focolare Movement, which is present on its five shores.

In France, **Vivre Ensemble [Life Together] in Cannes** promotes interreligious dialogue among Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and Christian communities with an annual march for peace. In **Malta**, collaboration with associations such as the Jesuit Refugee Service and *Caritas* promotes a range of activities, from projects in schools, to celebrating diversity, to original initiatives such as the ‘*Refugee Simulation Exercise*’, in which students are guided to take a short journey simulating what

it would be like to have an experience of being refugees. The **Living Peace International** network, which is very active in both Spain and Portugal, carries out numerous projects with this goal. In Nice and Ventimiglia, **on the border between France and Italy**, specialists in tropical diseases and gynaecology offer free consultations for migrant women.

An artistic project twinning Sicily and Malta has given rise to the **Mediterranean project of fraternity: *Sguardi e Dialoghi*** [Looks and Dialogues]. The **Med 25 Le Bel Espoir** project deserves special attention. It is a training ship sailing for peace throughout the Mediterranean. The *Le Bel Espoir* expedition is also part of the peace process launched in Bari in 2020. The presence of a focolare house in **Martil, Morocco**, is a witness of fraternity and dialogue. From the 27th to the 29th of July 2024, 400 young people took part in the interregional Genfest in southern Italy, held in **Lamezia Terme**, with stops on the Island of Capo Rizzuto and Cutro (where 94 people died in a shipwreck off its coast in February 2023), on the theme “Together to care”.

With the support of the European Commission, the *MediterraNEW* Project has been launched, bringing together six countries in the Mediterranean (Spain, France, Italy, Croatia, Lebanon, and Egypt) in initiatives and programmes for adolescents with a migrant background, with programmes in interculturalism, conflict resolution, dialogue and peace. A kit of educational tools is being developed in response to the main challenges they have to face. The *Giorgio La Pira* International Student Centre initiated a project, which together with the New Humanity Movement, has involved many of the

educational agencies of the Focolare Movement. It is also one of the promoters of the Mediterranean Youth Council, a permanent assembly that brings together young delegates from 20 countries bordering on the Mediterranean. Among the most recent projects is “Caring” which aims at providing twinning opportunities and mutual support among ecclesial communities around the Mediterranean.

Finally, during a spiritual retreat attended by 240 focolarini from **Spain and the Middle East**, a commitment was made to multiply micro-actions for peace.



Joint manifesto for peace in the Middle East

Aware that the macro level is built at the micro level and with the responsibility not to leave governments alone, we commit ourselves to:

- Implement alliances and collaboration among the peoples of the Mediterranean.
- Increase networks of solidarity to support, first and foremost, the victims of war.
- Promote educational programmes to reduce the intercultural and intergenerational divide and instil in the younger generations a culture of peace, inclusion and nonviolence.
- Encourage local and global initiatives that promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

PEACE

**But with a God who visits you every morning,
if you wish, one city is not enough
Come to an agreement with him, and aim further:
at your country, at everyone's country, at the world.**

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 16:
Peace, justice, and strong institutions

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 17:
Partnerships for the goals

Laudato si':
Intergenerational and social justice;
social-environmental crisis

Fratelli tutti:
The rights of peoples

Goma, Nord Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo: This region shares a border with Rwanda which, unfortunately, is still today the scene of conflicts that have their roots in the dramatic crisis that shook the country in 1994. A military campaign led by the rebel group known as "M-23" has forced more than 300,000 people to flee their homes since 2022.

The involvement of neighbouring countries and various organizations gives the crisis in Kivu an international dimension (Source: Ispi). It is in this context that **Gen Fuoco**, a musical group founded in 2005, uses art to promote peace, fraternity and social transformation. Composed of young singers, it has participated in international events (Genfest Philippines 2018, Genfest Burundi 2024), involving hundreds of people. Their songs address social, spiritual and ecological issues and have become the collective voice of young people.

The fruits are evident in the personal development of its members, the reduction of social tensions, increase of unity in diversity and the spreading of the message of peace at the regional level. The effects are evaluated through testimonials, the growth of the group and international invitations.

TAGS

ACTIVE_CITIZENSHIP
SOCIAL_COMMUNICATION
INTERCULTURAL_DIALOGUE
BASIC_EDUCATION
SPIRITUAL_FORMATION
HUMAN_FORMATION
PEACE_RIGHTS
CULTURAL_PRODUCTION

For a culture of peace

There are many paths that lead to peace: direct action against war; developing mutual understanding to promote dialogue - among social groups, peoples and ethnic groups - raising awareness among children from the time they begin school; frontline commitment to defend oppressed peoples; promoting the reasons behind dialogue instead of extremism and polarization. And also, **forming consciences and attitudes through cultural investment**. This is the field in which publishing houses and magazines linked to the Focolare Movement in different parts of the world are particularly active. Among these, in addition to perhaps the best-known Italian publishing house *Città Nuova*, is **the publishing house Ciudad Nueva in Buenos Aires**, which, since its inception in 1963, has been publishing content to spread a culture of unity and fraternity. Since 2022, it has been producing a joint digital magazine for the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay). It also publishes books, agendas and podcasts, and reached over 17,000 readers in 2024. It aims to raise awareness on issues of peace, ecology, spirituality and interreligious dialogue, with a cutting-edge impact on young and adult audiences.

The **NetOne** network is also active in the Southern Cone, bringing together professionals in the field of communication who want to promote a journalism that is ethical and based on relationships. In Argentina, it organizes cinema discussions, seminars, meetings for young journalists and workshops on responsible communication. It involves universities, the media

and activists, with the aim of building a more informed and inclusive citizenship. In 2024, **Focolare Media, USA**, strengthened its mission to promote unity by producing multilingual content on spirituality, artificial intelligence, economics and peace, with significant digital growth. It has participated in global events involving over 85,000 people, promoting interreligious dialogue, education and civic engagement. **Dialogue among various Christian churches as a path to peace** is the hallmark of New City, a magazine and publishing house active since 1970 in the United Kingdom, with a focus on ecumenism and building community. Run by volunteers, in 2024 it published 11 issues of the magazine and 9 books (5 new + 4 reprints), reaching an international community. **Al Madina Al Jadida**, based in Lebanon, is an Arabic-language magazine founded by the Focolare Movement, active since 1970, which promotes a culture of fraternity and interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

Now published online, with articles also read on radio and TV, it spreads the spirituality of unity, dialogue among cultures and religions, and formation

through the media. A tiny voice, but one that does not give up in the sea of tensions in the Middle East, it's a drop of hope for lasting peace.



Dialogue4All

Where: Belgium, Rotselaar

Beneficiari: 400 students (retreats); 150 young people and adults (Run4Unity); 35 participants in Start4Change (30 young people, 5 educators); families and teachers

Founded in 2022 in Rotselaar to offer young people spaces for dialogue, listening and the search for meaning in a secularized society. With school retreats, peace workshops, and training sessions inspired by Laudato Si' and Fratelli Tutti, the project ignites hope in young people, stimulates their leadership, and builds bridges between cultures and generations.

INSIEME per il Bene Comune (TOGETHER for the Common Good)

Where: Italy, Vibo Valentia

Beneficiari: Citizens of Vibo Valentia, Pizzo, Rende, and Cassano allo Jonio; healthcare workers; local community

Founded six years ago by the local Focolare community, the association promotes active citizenship, dialogue and collaboration with local institutions on issues related to politics, health and the environment. Through the "Pact between electors and elected" and advocacy activities, it encourages responsible participation in civil life and care for the local area. It works in a network for the common good **in one of the most vulnerable areas of Italy.**

La Pira International Student Centre

Where: Italy, Florence

Beneficiari: approximately 1,850 people from 50 countries: students, educators, volunteers

www.centrointernazionalelapira.org

A permanent centre for education in peace, hospitality and good citizenship. Since 1978, the La Pira Centre has welcomed international students who come to Florence, offering them language courses, orientation to their new country, intercultural activities and European projects. It promotes integration, interreligious dialogue and civic education. It is a reference point for young people from over 50 countries, contributing to a welcoming, inclusive and educational environment.

New Caledonia

In May 2024, civil unrest broke out in **New Caledonia**, one of France's overseas territories in the Pacific. The beautiful island of Noumea was ruined, and **numerous businesses, churches and schools** were destroyed or damaged. The total damage estimated at over **€1 billion**. The impact was devastating for the population, and many found themselves without any means

of subsistence. To meet this need, the **Oceania Team of the Communion of Goods**, which regularly circulates needs and surpluses throughout the Focolare community, taking into account those most in need, immediately **launched a relief initiative for New Caledonia**. All over the area - **in various cities in Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji** – many different kinds of initiatives have sprung up.

Goccia dopo Goccia

Where: Thailand, Mae Sot

www.gocciadopogoccia.ch

The *Goccia dopo Goccia [Drop-by-Drop]* Association operates permanently along the border between Thailand and Myanmar, offering support to vulnerable groups of the population. The main activities currently underway are in the field of **education**, with the management of a school with over 100 students, ensuring access to education for children and young people excluded from the school system; **assistance to displaced persons and migrants**, with support for approximately **70 families**, providing basic necessities and social accompaniment; **support for vulnerable women**, with targeted actions for around **15 women** (mothers and abandoned women), providing them with economic and psychological support; **humanitarian aid to the Mae La (Mae Ra Mat) refugee camp**, with monthly distribution of essential goods and services to refugees in the camp; a

project in Myanmar (Ei Inne area) with direct help for **about 20 families in extreme poverty**, through distribution of food, basic necessities and educational support. Every month, the association's activities reach approximately **1,000 people**, including children, women and families fleeing war or in conditions of severe economic hardship. *Goccia dopo Goccia* is committed to helping people living below the poverty line and without access to education, working in the areas most affected by conflict and instability.

MilONGa

www.milongaproject.org

Direct beneficiaries: 1,500 young people (at Genfest 2024);
15 young people in other annual programmes
Indirect beneficiaries: about 5,000 people in communities, families, and little towns

International volunteer programme started in 2016 for young people between 18 and 35 years of age, with programmes on four continents which promote fraternity, intercultural formation and service in social organizations. Its inspiration comes from the specific mission of the Focolare Movement to work for unity and universal fraternity. This project contributes to the personal and professional growth of young people and to the impact they can have on their local society.

Living Peace International

www.livingpeaceinternational.org

We believe in the need to affirm a culture of peace, which is the only thing that can generate respect, and can respond to the truest and deepest questions of each and every one of us, on the difficult path towards universal fraternity.

To date, more than 1,700 schools and groups have joined the project which has reached over 1 million children, young people and adults on all five continents.

The project aims to strengthen collaboration with many other people around the world so as to build a “network” of peace that embraces the earth. In fact, Living Peace is also a platform: more than 80 international organizations work in synergy with the project, sharing peace initiatives and actions that are then proposed on their respective networks.



Focus: Living Peace in Spain Educating for peace in every situation

The international Living Peace project has been active in Spain since 2013 and involves schools, universities, parishes, retirement homes, groups and associations. The beneficiaries are people of all ages and religions.

Every year, **International Peace Day (21 September)** and **School Day for Nonviolence and Peace (30 January)** are celebrated.

Projects with a particular theme are carried out throughout the year. Among these, the work of the **Álvarez Cubero school** in Priego de Córdoba led to the initiative “Priego - without architectural barriers” to promote accessibility. In 2024, the third “Peace Cube” in Spain was inaugurated in the town of **Bolea (Huesca)**, the result of six years of activity by the Virgen de la Soledad school. The event received national and international coverage and was attended by 150 people, including leaders of various institutions. The Peace Cube is now a popular destination for numerous schools in the region.

United World Project

www.unitedworldproject.org

A lively and inclusive platform for fraternity, a permanent project. The aim of the United World Project is to tell and connect stories and journeys, which may be both individual or collective, happening every day or one-off. Stories and journeys that build unity, dialogue and peace in the world. It is a space that gives visibility and spreads good practices that are already sowing seeds of fraternity.

Significant experiences

In 2024, over **1,500 young people** participated in phase 3 of Genfest held in Brazil, and **46 local events** were also held worldwide, involving approximately **50,000 youth**.

In Mar del Plata (Argentina), a young person inspired by Genfest started the *Padel* project to educate children about peace through sports and the “cube of peace”.

Thirty activists from different organizations (New Humanity, Living Peace, CLAYSS, New City...) joined the “*UWC Routing Team*”, freely offering their assistance for the development of the *United World Communities*.

An action which is glocal, rooted and interconnected

The global network of the *United World Communities*, launched at Genfest 2024, brings together over 5,000 people, groups and organizations active on all continents. It offers a dynamic space for learning, collaboration and action, aimed at having an impact on eight key areas of social life, where everyone can contribute in a practical way.

United World Week: visibility and impact

From the 1st to the 7th of May, the *United World Week* represents the highlight of the year, giving visibility to the initiatives of the communities and to the stories of fraternity in action. Hundreds of local events take place around the world, including numerous events of the Run4Unity, the relay race for peace, for and with teenagers.

United World News: telling stories to inspire

Through its website and social media channels, the *United World News* tells the stories of those who are already working for unity, with the aim of inspiring and stirring up new energy.

Gen Verde

Through artistic performances, Gen Verde generates a transformation that starts at the personal level and then has an impact on society. Their experiences, songs and personal experiences have an impact on the people they come into contact with, making them, in turn, protagonists and mediators of a message that revolutionizes their way of thinking and acting. Starting from the experiential approach of artistic workshops, young people acquire new skills that increase their self-esteem and help them to become agents of change.

One testimony among many: *“The participants left with new hope and confidence that they can make this world a better place simply by building bridges of love and friendship. Some might call it a utopia, but there is nothing more real than seeing hundreds of people leave after a Gen Verde performance, determined to value and cultivate relationships in their lives in a new way.”*

(Prof. Brian K. Reynolds, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan)



Gen Rosso

Commitment to peace is one of the cornerstones of this international band, which was formed in the 1960s. For many, *Gen Rosso's concert for peace* is unforgettable, having produced some very well-known songs, such as “*Hopes of Peace*.”

This commitment continued in 2024 in Ulan Bator, Mongolia! The final concert there was the climax of a series of artistic workshops with the young people, which encouraged cultural exchange and valued youth expressions as a language of fraternity. On stage, “*Hopes of Peace*” was sung in Mongolian.



From the document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together

Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019

In the name of God who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and who has called them to live together as brothers and sisters, to fill the earth and make known the values of goodness, love and peace.

In the name of innocent human life that God has forbidden to kill, affirming that whoever kills a person is like one who kills the whole of humanity, and that whoever saves a person is like one who saves the whole of humanity.

In the name of the poor, the destitute, the marginalized and those most in need whom God has commanded us to help as a duty required of all persons, especially the wealthy and those of means.

In the name of orphans, widows, refugees and those exiled from their homes and their countries; in the name of all victims of wars, persecution and injustice; in the name of the weak, those who live in fear, prisoners of war and those tortured in any part of the world, without distinction.

In the name of peoples who have lost their security, peace, and the possibility of living together, becoming victims of destruction, calamity and war.

In the name of human fraternity that embraces all human beings, unites them and renders them equal.

In the name of this fraternity torn apart by policies of extremism and division, by systems of unrestrained profit or by hateful ideological tendencies that manipulate the actions and the future of men and women.

In the name of freedom, that God has given to all human beings creating them free and distinguishing them by this gift. In the name of justice and mercy, the foundations of prosperity and the cornerstone of faith.

In the name of all persons of good will present in every part of the world.

In the name of God and of everything stated thus far, ... [we] declare the adoption of a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard.



Financial report

The 2024 financial report

The Focolare Movement is represented in various countries by legal bodies and associations that are inspired by its values and aims, operating in compliance with local civil regulations and tax regimes. The variety of national and regional legislative systems results in very different accounting and reporting methods.

This complexity, combined with the vastness of the initiatives, projects and activities carried out in local communities around the world, and the particular attention paid to the principle of subsidiarity, does not allow for the preparation of a single, comprehensive financial report. It is therefore not possible to include in a single document everything that is carried out in the various branches of the Movement and in the regional centres that guide its action.

The 2024 financial report refers to those activities directly supported, in full or in part, by the sharing of resources implemented by those belonging to the Movement and shared at an international level, together with donations in support of its mission or for specific projects.

During the drafting of the report, it became clear that the number of initiatives, projects and activities far exceeds the possibilities for direct support and assistance offered by the resources that are actually available.

This gives rise to the need to define priorities based on clear criteria, giving particular preference to initiatives that give an immediate response to the most urgent needs and are fully consistent with the fundamental mission of the Focolare Movement. It is a constant commitment to ensure that every action is directed towards the common good, without ever losing sight of our identity and founding values: to cooperate in building a more united world, inspired by Jesus' prayer to the Father 'that they may all be one' (Jn 17:21).

Special attention is paid to communities and individuals in particularly vulnerable situations, with the aim of offering support that is not only timely but also sustainable over time.

In this way, the management of economic resources becomes a tangible expression of closeness to those experiencing hardship, strengthening the network of communion that characterises the Movement.

Greater flexibility and operational easiness, more effective service to geographical areas and local communities, and an integral and lasting sustainability: these are the aims that guide the process of organisational simplification underway at the International Centre of the Movement and in the accompaniment of the projects directly connected to it. This process also aims to free up resources to be allocated to the Focolare Movement's mission throughout the world.

Despite its complexity and dynamism, this process has already generated significant synergies and collaborations, promoting more in-depth analysis of ongoing processes and more precise planning, which has also contributed to strengthening various partnerships.

The information below shows the overall income and expenditure for 2024, as reported in the International Centre's financial statement and the annual financial statements of the regional centres, subdivided into geographical areas. Although some economic difficulties are apparent in specific zones, overall, the situation is sustainable, based mainly on the sharing of resources among all those who belong to the Movement.

It also includes details of extraordinary aid for people in need, from the shared resources of those who belong to the Movement and also through the Economy of Communion network, practical expressions of the spirit of reciprocity that characterises the Movement, in reaching out to one another.

Geneviève Sanze and Ruperto Battiston
General Councillors for the communion of goods,
economy and work

TOTAL INCOME

8,130,910



TOTAL EXPENDITURE

9,639,641



Extraordinary communion of goods of those belonging to the Movement, donations and inheritances

4,060,754

Ordinary communion of goods of those belonging to the Movement

3,493,050

From external institutions for formation projects

345,210

Sale of real estate

231,896

Management and services of the International Centre

2,083,941

Outreach and events

187,833

Formation projects

111,382

Research centres and historical archives

288,940

Youth centres and youth projects

747,350

Support to the Zones (geographical areas)

532,732

Dialogues

585,328

International little towns

601,310

Property management and maintenance

1,615,584

Media – IT – Translations

1,452,926

Cultural and social initiatives

1,222,084

Extraordinary support for people in need

210,231



Deficit covered by the communion of goods from previous years

1,508,731

REPORTS FROM GEOGRAPHICAL ZONES AS OF 30 JUNE 2024



In addition to international cooperation projects and support for children and families at a distance, carried out through Action for a United World (AMU) and Action for New Families (AFN), humanitarian emergency aid, and support for initiatives and projects in the fields of education, health and the fight against hunger and poverty, the Focolare Movement also has an extraordinary communion of goods aimed at helping people in the Movement who find themselves in situations of particular need and at structures that help the poor. Here are the figures for the last three years.

EXTRAORDINARY AID FOR PEOPLE IN NEED 2022-2024

	2022	2023	2024
CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED	265,577	238,231	150,431
AID PROVIDED FOR			
Contribution for EoC projects providing extraordinary aid to people in need	180,683	-	-
Direct aid to families and individuals in need	10,184	14,279	13,503
Education and other needs, Africa	10,558	10,785	33,325
Aid to refugees and families, America	11,680	-	11,740
Medical care, Asia	-	28,516	-
Contribution for the reconstruction of the Kinshasa Hospital in Congo	-	-	150,000
TOTAL	213,105	53,580	208,568
FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR SUBSEQUENT YEARS	52,472	237,123	178,986

INCOME *(communion of goods and other)*

Africa and Middle East	505,972
Asia and Oceania	952,502
Americas	2,017,135
Europe	5,102,308

TOTAL 8,577,917

EXPENDITURE

Africa and Middle East	458,629
Asia and Oceania	1,266,045
Americas	1,807,840
Europe	4,809,985

TOTAL 8,342,499

Surplus set aside for future years

235,418

EXPENSES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ENTITIES RELATED TO SAFEGUARDING AND FORMATION

182,216

These are the funds allocated in 2024 to the International Centre of the Focolare Movement to support, with specific budget items, the entities dedicated to safeguarding: the Independent Central Commission, the Supervisory Board, the International Commission for Formation and the Office for Safeguarding. In the various geographical areas, expenditure items relating to local safeguarding organisations are included in individual budgets.



AID DISTRIBUTED BY THE ECONOMY OF COMMUNION IN 2024

Individual assistance	290,920
Promotion and development	296,980
Peace education	13,640
Emergencies	41,482
Other projects	26,544

TOTAL 669,566



394 aid packages for people in need
(health, food, housing, income-generating activities)

14 projects in 13 countries
(Brazil, Burundi, Cuba, Ecuador, Italy, Turkey, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Ukraine, Argentina, Bolivia, Middle East)



CREDITS

Our gratitude for what has been achieved and brought together in this 2024 Communion of Action Report goes first and foremost to all the people, communities and centres of the Focolare Movement who, with commitment, enthusiasm and sacrifice, have put their hearts, minds and hands at the service of others, of their neighbours.

But equally great is the gratitude of the entire Focolare Movement to our stakeholders: our many friends, ecclesial movements and new communities, associations and groups, institutions, funding agencies, both ecclesial and civil. By walking together, we share activities, goals, projects and aspirations, creating spaces that generate the future and hope. These are true strategic partnerships: a priceless network of relationships that helps to sustain life and the commitment to a more fraternal and peaceful world.

For comments and suggestions on the 2024 Communion in Action Report, please write to bdc@focolare.org

The 2024 Communion in Action Report was prepared by the Office for the **Communion of Goods, Economy and Work**, in collaboration with the **Communications and Multimedia Service and the Linguistic Services** of the International Centre of the Focolare Movement.

The texts were written by **Maria Chiara De Lorenzo**, an Italian journalist currently living in Brussels (Belgium).

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