



Didactic Booklet

Booklet n° 4—December 2004

Implementation of AIC guidelines

«We have to let
them come to
life in reality.»

Introduction

The operational Guidelines are real orientation for work and action. Our long term work program is essentially based on these Operational Guidelines. From this program ensue concrete projects at all levels which allow us to *serve the poor* better.

This booklet is a working document which we shall use during the Delegates' Assembly in order to go deeper into the Operational Guidelines and their concrete implementation.

The training manual on the implementation of the Operational Guidelines will be written from this document which has been worked out on the basis of your answers and which will be enriched by your thoughts during the Assembly. The aim of this booklet is to provide the AIC volunteers with data and concrete and applicable ideas, which will enable them to understand better the meaning of the Guidelines and motivate the volunteers to implement them in their everyday work. In this way, the poor will really feel its benefits.

CONTENT

- ▶ Introduction
Operational Guidelines
- ▶ Implementation of the guidelines and their impact
 - ▶ Empowerment
 - ▶ Institutional Development
 - ▶ Co-responsability
- ▶ Conclusion

Among the national associations' answers we can read:

“These reflections are to help understand the Operational Guidelines. These must not only be nice fashionable words, but we have to implement them in our daily work. It is not enough to mention them in our projects, we have to let them come to life in reality.”

In our association, training is not an objective, but a means: we train, not in order to obtain a degree which leads to a certain type of activity, but to be able to serve the poor well, according to the spirit of Saint Vincent who used to say: *“Good has to be done properly”*.

A training application will be more beneficial if the participants really understand that they should not stop at the didactic aspect of the experts' intervention but that they also have to get involved through their personal experience. Once the training has been perfectly taken in, one reaches a stage of personal internalisation, transformation, development of ideas, creativity, at a personal as much as at a group level.

To conclude, training can only be envisaged when the interested people or groups have an attitude of active, conscious and constructive participation and commit themselves to taking in and adapting the training personally. Training should therefore not be a one-way process (made for us by the others), through presentations, methods, etc. but should go hand in hand with everyone's decision and personal commitment.

We received answers from **36%** of the national associations or groups in training. Thus these results reflect only part of the reality of life in the countries concerned. However we decided that this contribution provide sufficient food for thought during the Assembly.

We invite you to study this Document and compare it with the actual reality experienced in your group. We ask you to reflect particularly upon the challenges, by focussing on the central theme of the Assembly: ***“How can the Guidelines benefit the poor?”*** We hope that you will share your progress, ideas and specific suggestions by passing them on to your country's representatives who will take part in the Assembly or by sending them directly to the AIC. These thoughts as well as the contributions of the workgroups during the Assembly, will be put down in a final document. This final document will be used as a working tool by all the associations and groups at grass-root level, in order to progress further on the path laid out by the Guidelines. In the meantime, the evaluation of the application of the Guidelines made by each group will help the AIC members to improve their service for the good of the poor.

In order to facilitate the application of the Operational Guidelines, it is important to know what they consist of and above all, to commit oneself to implementing them. You will find their complete wording as follows.



Operational Guidelines 2002-2006

1. Empowerment

To question our relationships with others and to recognize the potential each person has within to develop. We shall favour the development of that potential. Through this attitude we shall be able to consider the poorest as true partners who have their own resources and solutions.

2. Development of the association

To create, through a process of empowerment at all levels an AIC which is more participative and works with greater solidarity and therefore we all feel co-responsible in the struggle against all forms of poverty

3. Social co responsibility

To assume with determination our civic shared responsibility to participate with strategies which are directed to the recomposition of the social fabric and to promote community networks that demand the participation of all, from the poorest to those in power both civic and religious.

Evaluation :

- ✓ It applies to every action from its beginning and with regularity
- ✓ It is an element to make the action more dynamic.
- ✓ It is an instrument of dialogue that helps us understand the balance of power and to resolve conflicts.

Participative leadership

- ✓ Changes the balance of power between the leader and the other members of the group.
- ✓ Gives rise to new leaders at all levels encouraging a greater participation of the youth
- ✓ Requires a specific formation

Twinnings :

- ✓ Demand a balanced exchange to create reciprocal development.
- ✓ Reinforce the sense of solidarity and of belonging to the AIC.
- ✓ Achieve mutual understanding and favour peace.

Sharing expertise :

- ✓ All local and national AIC groups have expertise that must be shared to answer more efficiently to porverties.

Networks :

- ✓ Are essential for action and communication. Without communication we will not have the power to transform society
- ✓ We commit ourselves to create networks of joint action with the poorest.
- ✓ To contribute to the transformation of society, we decided to use the AIC for a concrete, common action to fight against violence towards women.

We commit ourselves with a sense of co-responsibility, determination and creativity to the struggle against poverty, because we consider it a privileged way to transform injustice into hope and to build a world of peace.



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDELINES AND THEIR IMPACT

The countries' answers recount the different stages the AIC teams go through in order to find their way progressively:

- ✓ First, one reflects on the Guidelines during meetings.
- ✓ Then, one uses them as a criteria to evaluate the conditions of poverty and the quality of the responses given by the volunteers.
- ✓ Finally, one reaches the level of practical and specific application in projects and concrete actions.

We find out that there are groups at every step of the way: some of them already implement the Guidelines and some others, after much thinking and reflection, realise that their actions are still merely supportive, or even promotional; that they do not know the real needs of the poor and that they have to provide more efficient responses. Although these groups are still far away from implementing the Guidelines, they have understood something very important: "to raise awareness of the real conditions and needs and to commit themselves to implementing the Guidelines in order to modify their traditional working methods". This constitutes an essential first step and is a good start.

The above observation shows us that we stand at a turning point. Now is the time to stop and evaluate in depth at which stage of the implementation of the Guidelines the local teams are situated. The National Counsels have the responsibility to help the local groups during this process. The AIC, at an international level, must also support this process. This is the only way, by acting co-responsibly and working together, that we will be able to map out the future. Now, thanks to the survey, we have at our disposal additional information and volunteers' experiences who have already successfully implemented the new Guidelines in their projects and initiatives. The opportunity for us to build on their positive experiences, rekindles our enthusiasm to forge ahead.

When the Guidelines are being implemented, one can see the impact they have, as much for the volunteers as for the beneficiaries' lives :

- ✓ Implementing the common Guidelines enables the volunteers to become aware of the sense of belonging and value of the AIC's internationality.
- ✓ The Guidelines enable them to become more up-to-date, to have a better attitude and to train to provide the poor with a better service.
- ✓ The Guidelines motivate the volunteers to feel more co-responsible, to take part in international life and to take on a role within society and the Church.
- ✓ The Guidelines establish networks and challenges which urge the volunteers to undertake training and not to perpetuate old-fashioned ways.

Moreover the difficulties encountered encourage us to look for new possibilities and new responses. As a matter of fact, these difficulties should not stop us, but they should be seen as challenges which motivate us to reach the first target of the AIC, its mission at all levels: better to serve the poor.

After these general remarks on the Guidelines, we are going to analyse each one of them in detail. This is no easy task, since, as we have seen above, the Guidelines interact with each other and it is often difficult to tell them apart. This is the reason why some of the reflections can apply to all Guidelines.

1. EMPOWERMENT

This Guideline seems to be the closest to the reality of the poor. It deals with the personal relationship between each volunteer and the people s/he is working with. Adapted to modern days' reality, this is a deepening and implementation of the method which promotes the "personal relationship with the poor"; this is one of the corner stones of Saint Vincent's project. Consequently, the Guideline of empowerment cannot remain a theory.

The empowerment motivates us to do some soul-searching as to the type of relationship we establish with the people we are working with, to ask ourselves which importance we give to their propositions, initiatives and potentials. It motivates us to question the type of support we give: Do we succeed in not deciding for them? Can we accept them the way they are? Are we able to make propositions rather than to tell them what to do, to wait that they are ready, to trust in their possibilities, to welcome their initiatives? Have we been able to make propositions instead of forcing them? In brief: do we do for them what God does for us? Thinking along those lines can make us aware of the repercussions on the lives of the poor that our change of attitude will bring about.

1.1. Summary of answers and comments

Implementation of the Guideline of Empowerment in the volunteers' service

- ✓ One observes that, by promoting the beneficiaries' empowerment, volunteers promote their own empowerment, since their self-esteem improves.
- ✓ As they become aware of their own competence, volunteers feel more fulfilled and more able.
- ✓ Implementing empowerment requires to develop training in listening.
- ✓ Working on projects can lead to volunteers' empowerment: they become more steadfast and responsible in their actions, they learn new technologies.

- ✓ The specific character of the Vincentian service can be found in the human and spiritual quality of the relationship between volunteers and beneficiaries. This is the reason why our attitude towards the poor is so important as well as our commitment to the implementation of the changes that the Guidelines put forward to us.

Implementation in the service to the poor

- ✓ By giving the poor some support vital for a worthier existence, our action goes beyond the rules and social conventions.
- ✓ The first step which generates self-esteem and change is to respect their dignity.
- ✓ The beneficiaries feel more respected and above all more respectable
- ✓ Some beneficiaries feel less ashamed of their situation
- ✓ Thanks to the micro-credit programmes, the beneficiaries regain confidence in themselves and in their own possibilities. This is how empowerment works and improves their situation.
- ✓ Work-training projects evolve. Besides technical courses, other types of training can be found such as: “Value training” “ Women’s empowerment” “Active Citizenship”.
- ✓ In the answers there is a certain confusion between empowerment and self-promotion. It is important to understand that these are different stages: in order to achieve empowerment, whether the volunteers’ or the beneficiaries’, we have to go further. Every action or project in the Empowerment Guideline should include the following points as targets:
 - ✓ Make the beneficiaries discover their competence
 - ✓ Promote their self-esteem
 - ✓ Motivate them to learn new ways to function.
 - ✓ Give them the opportunity to learn about and stand up for their rights; find out about their duties and fulfil them; and commit themselves to becoming active members of the community.

For example :

Opening a workshop for women to learn computing or sewing so that they can work: this is self-promotion. To implement empowerment to take place, it is not enough to open the workshop, one also has to help the beneficiaries to become aware of their possibilities and rights, to know how to get by in society and deal with the institutions, to understand the bureaucratic rules, etc. All this is directly linked with self-esteem and improved status and leads to empowerment.

1.2 Difficulties encountered while implementing Empowerment

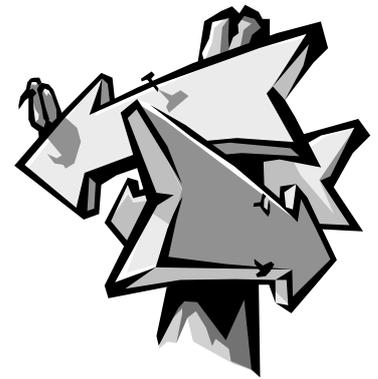
- ✓ The meaning of the word “empowerment” is misunderstood
- ✓ Dismissal of the concept, more out of ignorance than because of its real meaning
- ✓ Apathy and fear of change
- ✓ For some of the groups and volunteers: conformism and lack of motivation to forge ahead
- ✓ Often the beneficiaries prefer to be assisted and do not want to see how important their participation would be
- ✓ Deeply ingrained practices which are difficult to eradicate

1.3. Challenges mentioned in the answers

- ✓ Promote the volunteers’ training so that their projects do not remain at a support level but have the possibility to evolve towards promotion and empowerment.
- ✓ Learn to understand the real needs of the poor by means of an analysis of their situation and a personal relationship based on true listening.
- ✓ New types of poverty appear every day. One has to stimulate the groups’ creativity to confront all the kinds of deprivations linked with each type of poverty. They can only be detected when listening attentively to the poor.
- ✓ Do not take decisions on behalf of the beneficiaries.
- ✓ Find the means to encourage those people who prefer to be assisted, to change.
- ✓ Reach out to the ones who do not desire to take part in the proposed projects and who tend to be the most excluded ones.
- ✓ Question and modify practices which do not evolve because of some volunteers’ negative attitude to change.
- ✓ Transform individual activities like, for example, visits into team-activities. This allows the establishment of a well-defined project and its regular evaluation for the good of the beneficiaries.
- ✓ Help the poor grab the opportunities which crop up. Often they miss them, either out of ignorance or fear.
- ✓ Allow and promote the fact that the poor are the actors of their own development
- ✓ Reinforce the existing solidarity mechanisms among the poor
- ✓ Improve spirituality within the group: the source of all charity and relationships is to be found in God’s words.

1.4. New ways

The points concerning the examples of projects, drafts for the implementation and new ways for each of the Operational Guidelines, will be developed by the workgroups during the Assembly. We invite you to reflect on the answers taken up in this document as well as on your own work. This will allow us to go further in the implementation of the Guidelines. The thoughts and conclusions of the workgroups will be taken up in the definitive document.



2. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Institutional development can be reached through a process of evaluation analysis of the situation of an association or institution. In order to understand better the institutional dynamics and their inconsistencies, we have to use successive approximations. Thus we shall reach a greater institutional coherence and be able to base the association's work and positioning on firmer ground. The starting-point of this process is the analysis of the Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats (FODA) which an association possesses or by which it is affected. This analysis helps to solve the imbalances coming from inside (strengths and weaknesses) as much as from outside (opportunities and threats), but it will never aim at building a complete whole. With its expertise and its social force, the institution, which should always be dynamic, aims at transforming itself in order to have a transforming impact on society and consequently on the lives of the poor.

2.1. Summary of the answers and comments

Generally the answers highlight the importance of this Guideline and give several reasons why it should be put into practice. They maintain that if an association is reinforced:

- ✓ It will train its members better,
- ✓ It will facilitate young people's recruitment and consequently promote the injection of new blood in the association,

With its expertise and its social force, the institution, which should always be dynamic, aims at transforming itself in order to have a transforming impact on society and consequently on the lives of the poor.

- ✓ It will be able to imagine and carry out new projects,
- ✓ It will have the strength and the ability to co-operate with other organisations, take part in social planning, influence the laws so that they put injustices right,
- ✓ While achieving all of this, we will offer a better service to the poor.

On the practical side, we realise that several associations have already achieved the process of Institutional Reinforcement, but on the whole, the answers do not show any specific data nor evaluation of their experience.

Some associations maintain that a successful project or twinning strengthens the links and the sense of belonging to the association, reinforce enthusiasm and constitutes the first step towards Institutional Development.

2.2. Difficulties encountered

- ✓ Lack of regular evaluations which would bring to light the necessity of reinforcing the associations
- ✓ Resistance and fear of changing
- ✓ Lack of motivation from the part of the National Councils
- ✓ Lack of economic resources to remunerate experts
- ✓ Lack of creativity to make up the lack of resources and little interest from the volunteers' part to start on a process of personal and group development.

2.3. Challenges

- ✓ Drawing up projects which should help funding the process of Institutional Reinforcement. Some organisations accept to finance this type of project; some others require that the association has already carried through the process of Development before financing them.
- ✓ Asking universities to provide for teaching staff or social workers free of charge or at a low cost in order to help the groups in their process of development.

Asking, through AIC International and within the framework of solidarity among the associations, for the support of an association which has already successfully carried through this process.

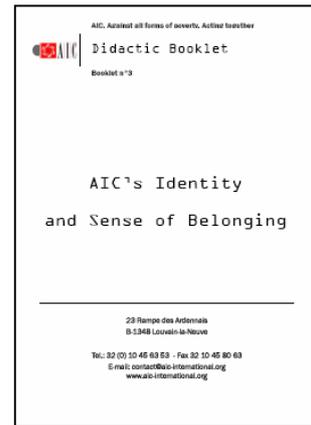
The AIC International considers identity and the sense of belonging as one of the cornerstones of this process. In order to work together with the national associations and the local groups, the AIC has drawn up a training manual on the theme "Identity and sense of belonging".

We think that, after having conferred in detail and worked together on the contents of this manual, an association may feel the need either to deepen or to start the process of Institutional Development, which will considerably improve the quality of its services and functioning.

2.4. Concrete Examples of the implementation of this process

The associations or groups from Belgium, Brazil, France, Guatemala, Mexico and Italy say that they have carried through this process with great success. It helped them improve the quality of their services, projects and initiatives, and sometimes, it promoted the beneficiaries' participation and empowerment. Some of these associations have shared their experiences and offer to help the ones who are interested. Generally they benefited from experts' advice themselves. An outsider's point of view is always highly profitable.

The process of Institutional Reinforcement carried out by the AIC has helped us, amongst others, to formulate clear propositions for the future of the association. It allowed us to see that in the face of the extent of the problems and needs of the associations, ***the creation of an AIC based on participation and solidarity had to be promoted***, which we now consider as one of the great strengths of our association. Exchanges between national associations and support from one association to the other, from one local group to the other, have had more impact than if they had been organized by the Executive Board or the International Secretariat. The process of Institutional Reinforcement has also helped us to draw up a plan of action defined and easy to evaluate. It also helped us to improve the way in which the AIC is presented and to make different types of presentation documents.



2.5. New ways for the implementation of this Guideline

In the workgroups of the Assembly, the associations will have to find new ways to implement the process of Institutional Reinforcement in the associations in which it has not been carried out yet.

3. CO-RESPONSIBILITY

In the Operational Guidelines, the members of the AIC maintain that they feel co-responsible: together, they look for new alternatives and solutions in order to create a fairer society, with more solidarity, with the participation of all its members, from the poorest to the political, civil and religious authorities, local, national and international organisations in order to eradicate poverty.

Moreover the spirituality based on helping the poorest reminds us, AIC volunteers, that we are all part of the same humanity. To hurt a poor, is to hurt the whole humanity. Our refusal of poverty falls within the framework of the whole humanity.

3.1. Summary of the answers and comments

Impacts of the implementation of the Guideline on the volunteers' service

As far as social co-responsibility is concerned, we can see that there are several levels of perception in the different countries:

- ✓ Facing dreadful poverty in some areas, the volunteers feel co-responsible in order to improve the conditions of the marginalized communities and they organise or support some projects.
- ✓ Some associations are aware of co-responsibility towards marginalized communities in countries poorer than their own and commit themselves in twinnings -it is often very successful- .
- ✓ Some others take part in Solidarity Fund in order to provide associations having difficulties with emergency help.
- ✓ Some associations have a deep experience of co-responsibility within the AIC and are able to train others (France, Brazil, Mexico).

These answers highlight a very positive point: ***co-responsibility is strongly felt within the AIC and towards the poor.*** The feeling of co-responsibility between AIC associations has increased sharply, thanks to exchanges of experiences and help with training. However it is still difficult to develop a sense of co-responsibility in society and public institutions.

It is important to reflect in depth on the meaning of the phrase ***“to feel responsible towards the poor”***.

One of the national associations writes: “... it is necessary for us to be fully aware of what causes poverty; it is urgent that, guided by our Christian faith, united in a co-responsible way to all who are fighting the same problem, we analyse the causes in depth in order to build peace on the basis of justice.”

Some answers speak of very positive projects and support in the marginalized communities, either in their own or in poorer countries. They signal that, in order to give them the possibility to change the situation, it is necessary to:



- ✓ Become a force and a source of propositions and inspiration within the institutions,
- ✓ Assume with determination our civic responsibilities
- ✓ Take an active part in the institutional planning of strategies aiming at reducing injustice and poverty
- ✓ Create the right conditions for the demands and suggestions of the poorest to be heard.

Impacts of the implementation of this Guideline on the poor

While reading the answers, we realised that the impact of the implementation of this Guideline on the situation of the poor is difficult to describe concretely.

This is due to the fact that dedication to social co-responsibility is often a long-term commitment, changes require a lot of time. Especially when the changes do not become apparent immediately, may we ask you to think about this reflection of a national association :

« What is it that transforms the life of the poor? If the poor are on their way to their own empowerment, they will end up becoming aware of our collaboration and action within the institutions. This will motivate them to develop a sense of responsibility towards themselves and towards the community. This will spur them on to become creative and they will start making propositions: social co-responsibility is a source of hope for them and hope in turn leads to change and commitment.»

We notice that the groups practise social co-responsibility at different levels :

“How can the Guidelines benefit the poor?”

At the local level:

One answer brings to our attention the following: one of the characteristics of our Vincentian service is that the groups at grass-root level work in a defined zone, which often happens to be the one where they live; this allows them to:

- ✓ Be very close to the beneficiaries and facilitate collaboration with the community and local institutions in order to meet the needs which have been identified;
- ✓ Voice criticism and make propositions within the public local institutions;
- ✓ Take part in the management of public affairs, by intervening in the planning of social programmes and offering the richness of their knowledge of the needs and demands of the poor.
- ✓ Take part in networks and platforms from which to struggle against poverty.

However some AIC associations have not yet found the adequate path to establish this type of collaboration and exert a stronger influence. One of the associations which succeeded in doing so speaks of its firsthand experience in improving the life conditions of the poor and highlights the importance of working in networks in order to reach these goals. They state:

“The network we are part of is a set of different organisations which work for a common cause transcending individual interests in order to contribute to the common good and trying to lead the way to change. In this network, we practise social co-responsibility as a shared task which allows agreements to be concluded in order to reach the set targets”.

National or international level

An association declares that nowadays there is a modern and efficient way of exercising social co-responsibility within reach of every association. It is about:

“Collaborating to the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations (ODM) and fitting into the National Plans for their realisation.”



Thanks to the answers to the questionnaires sent by the associations in September 2004, the AIC took part in a meeting in New York on the role of the NGOs and civil society in the evaluation of the Millennium's Goals. We sorted out the answers that had been received and presented them to the special commission of the United Nations in New York. This meeting highlighted that, on one hand the population is not informed enough on the Millennium Declaration and on the other hand, that the governments are themselves far from respecting their commitments to the millennium valid until 2015. Some answers stipulate:

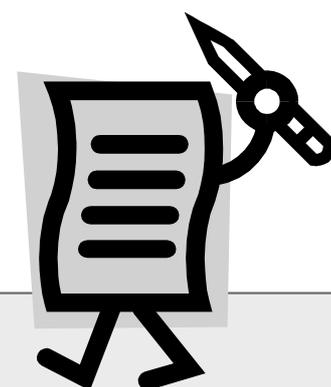
"It is up to us, the citizens, to put pressure on the structures of the State so that the State also reaches those Millennium goals which have not yet been taken into account in the official state programmes. All these goals are necessary for the different communities."

Why is it important for the AIC volunteers to know and deepen their understanding of the Millennium goals?

The central topic is to accelerate the pace of development to achieve peace, security, human rights and durable development. This is an ambitious but feasible challenge, on condition that there would be political will and pressure from society on the governments. The NGOs must not deprive themselves neither of the influence, nor of the power they may have on their governments.

The eight Millennium Goals fall within the scope of the actions already carried out by several AIC associations. (See in the annex the example given in the document on the implementation of the Millennium Goals presented by the AIC-Madagascar).

This awareness will allow us to improve and develop our work with public authorities and funding organisations.



As a reminder, we quote here the eight Millennium Targets of the United Nations which will have to be achieved by 2015:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary schooling.
3. Promote gender and empower women.
4. Reduce child mortality.
5. Improve maternal health.
6. Combat HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases.
7. Ensure environmental sustainability.
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

3.2. Difficulties encountered

Almost all the answers mention:

- ✓ Lack of co-operation from public authorities;
- ✓ Little or no public awareness and society's indifference
- ✓ General loss of ethical and social values
- ✓ Lack of economic resources
- ✓ Corruption of the institutions
- ✓ Some associations cannot have an impact on society nor benefit from social communication means because they have to work underground.

We note that the majority of the difficulties reported in the answers are external difficulties. They are not "our" difficulties but threats or obstacles coming from society or institutions, for example, corruption of the administrations, society's indifference, structural injustice. The answers present these difficulties as if they were separated from our reality, as if they were something preventing us from developing our actions and limiting us.

Very few answers mention internal difficulties within the group. They quote that :

- ✓ There is a lack of competence and professionalism for this type of collaboration, but, in spite of the difficulties, we are learning to work together with active and competent collaborators and with public and private institutions, given the fact that we do this for the good of the poor.
- ✓ Volunteers show little interest in training; they do not know how to get in touch with other organisations or institutions in order to be able to work together.
- ✓ Volunteers can be kind of apathetic: a lot of them refuse to take on responsibilities at different levels within the association, not because of a lack of competence but because they lack the sense of co-responsibility.

We would like to comment on an answer concerning the volunteers' attitude :

They do not feel the need to ask for the back-up or support from other organisations, because they consider that they can find resources themselves.

This could be considered as a strength, though it brings us to comment in the following way : co-responsibility does not only refer to the economic aspect, nor does it aim to satisfy the internal needs of an association or group in order to fund a given service. Co-responsibility implies an exchange, give and take, put something at the others' disposal, it can be one's own potential, competence, vision of real life, and this should always happen for the good of the poor. Co-responsibility implies that we are looking for and finding solutions together as we are growing together. Only by working in co-responsibility with the various parties involved shall we exert a real transforming impact on the lives and situations of the poorest.

We invite you to further ask yourselves about the attitudes of the volunteers towards social co-responsibility and the reasons which cause them not to take into account the internal difficulties.

3.3. Challenges mentioned in the answers

As far as co-responsibility with the poor is concerned:

- ✓ Act in spite of outside difficulties, make an effort to face this problem and try by all means to change the negative realities of the lives of the poor. This is why we are here, this is the *raison d'être* of our associations.
- ✓ Promote “the ethics of responsibility” against the ethics of aggression, and aggressiveness.
- ✓ Resist the temptation of putting up with injustice.
- ✓ Do not lose the ability to be scandalised.
- ✓ Be open to new needs and emergencies of the situations
- ✓ Look for the poorest, concern yourselves with their situations and the reasons which bring them about.
- ✓ Try to be more co-responsible and “give more” to the poor in spite of the volunteers’ ageing and diminishing numbers.
- ✓ Increase co-responsibility by including the institutions into an exchange of resources, human as much as material.

Within the association

- ✓ Better understand the meaning of co-responsibility within each association.
- ✓ Evaluate and improve co-responsibility in each of its existing services.
- ✓ Detect the faults due to wanting sense of co-responsibility, in the services as much as in the accomplishment of different tasks.
- ✓ Seriously reflect, in each group, on co-responsibility, its functioning and on everyone’s availability to take on tasks: a weak sense of co-responsibility within the group weakens the sense of belonging.

3.5. New ways

They will be established by the workgroups during Assembly.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the Guidelines is to help each AIC member to serve the poor better.

According to the Guidelines, evaluation is a feature which is meant to energise action.

As we have seen above, the answers to the questionnaires tell us that the AIC members are in the process of making big progress with a lot of enthusiasm, and find in the Guidelines, support and motivation to forge ahead. Some have not yet found the means to walk on the path put forward to them, but with determination and application/zeal, they will succeed.

The implementation of the Guidelines in the groups at grass-root level is a process which requires time and effort.

The answers highlight the facts that:

- ✓ The implementation of the Guidelines in the groups at grass-root level is a process which requires time and effort.
- ✓ It is important to start putting the Guidelines into practice by applying them regularly even to seemingly minor matters of everyday life, like simple gestures, as an expression of our Vincentian spirit.
- ✓ All the elements and suggestions already found in the answers as much as those which will be the outcome of the Assembly will help us to energise our action and improve the quality of the services offered.
- ✓ Just like the past Guidelines did, the current Guidelines interact with each other; at times, it is difficult to tell them apart. In order to achieve real empowerment, we have to act co-responsibly; in order for the groups to change and start moving in this direction, it is very often necessary to reinforce the association.



A great challenge

As we all know, the Operational Guidelines are being worked upon in the Assemblies from the answers to the survey sent to all the groups at grass-root level. This survey aims at detecting the most pressing needs of the poor, and give volunteers the opportunity to share their worries, suggestions and successes. The Guidelines come from the volunteers themselves; each volunteer and group at grass-root level has the responsibility to bring them to life and to implement the Guidelines in order to improve the service of the volunteers and take on the situations which generate poverty and deny the poor all rights to the future.

It is an important challenge to reduce the distance between the propositions issued from the International Assemblies (the Guidelines) and the concrete actions of the teams at grass-root level. This is a challenge as much for the local group as for the national directives and the Executive Office.

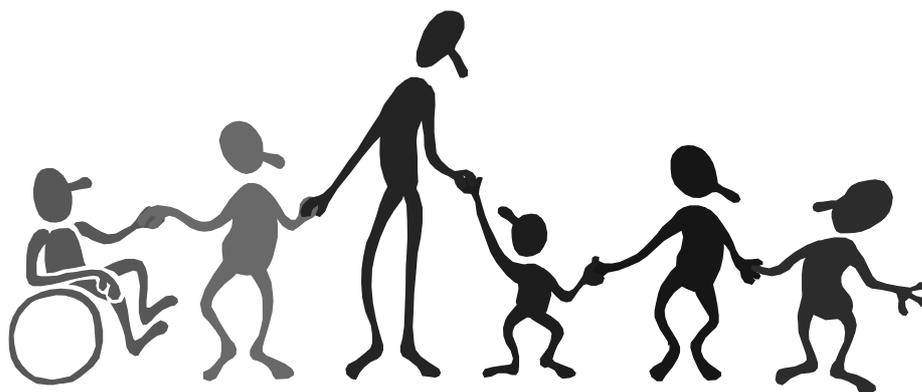
We have to continue, with enthusiasm and hope while remembering Saint Vincent's attitude:

"His composure was attracting attention. Vincent was aware of fulfilling God's work: "God's matters happen all by themselves and true wisdom consists in following providence step by step".

Saint Vincent obediently followed providence, which is the reason why he took time before setting off. But as soon as he perceived the signs that God's will was at work in the works, **he became obstinate, firm and unshakeable.**"

(L. Mezzadri, "Saint Vincent et le charisme de la charité". Rome, 2002)

Let us all AIC members act in a similar way for the good of the poor.





A mainly women's association organized
at world level, including
more than 150,000 volunteers
in 6,000 local teams in 50 countries.

Founded by St. Vincent de Paul in 1617
to fight any forms of poverty and
injustice and to give women an active
social and recognized role,
in a spirit of solidarity

Editor:

Agnès Dandois

Tel.: 32 (0) 10 45 63 53

mail: contact@aic-international.org

www.aic-international.org



1 Year Subscription :

Euro 10

US Dollars 10

On your AIC national association bank account

Collaborators
for this issue :

Redaction :

*Marina Costa,
Patricia de Nava
Agnès Dandois*

Translations :

*Marie Caroline Lièvre
Bénédicte de Bellefroid
Ida Tomaschu
Eunice Martins,
Anne Sturm
Christa Foelting*

Design :

Béatrice Dupriez

Previous issues :

*Empowerment (n°1)
Hermanamientos (n°2)
AIC Identity (n°3)*