



## USA, Ecological and Sustainable Development Activities

*“Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others.” (Laudato Si, 159)*

This project aims to include more fresh fruits and vegetables in food distributions to those in need. There is also a program to provide breakfasts during the summer.



### Location of the project

3 local AIC associations are involved: Knoxville (Tennessee), Indianapolis (Indiana) and St. Anthony's in North Beach (Maryland).

### Analysis of the current situation

Several associations of AIC volunteers in the United States have begun to include fruits and vegetables in their food distributions to those who are most in need:

- **In Knoxville**, Tennessee, volunteers found that there was a need to increase the nutritional value of food packages. Previously, all the fruits and vegetables distributed were canned. Five years ago, they asked for subsidies to add fresh fruits and vegetables to food parcels. They were able to add apples, oranges and bananas. They are still doing this today, but now they are the ones who buy these products.
- In Indiana, **Indianapolis**, volunteers distribute food during the summer in several locations, six days a week, especially for children who, during the school year, benefit

from a breakfast and lunch program; but during the summer holidays they might be left hungry if the mobile food distributions, Gleaners, were not there.

- Over the past two years, the volunteers from the St. Anthony group in **North Beach**, Maryland, have been trying to improve their product distribution, which previously only included non-perishables.

## **Beneficiaries**

In Knoxville, Tennessee, volunteers began working with local associations, such as "Feeding America" and "Second Harvest", two groups that provide products for food parcels, as well as "Food Rescue", an organization that offers packaged products from nearby grocery stores.

In Indiana, Indianapolis, last summer, volunteers participated in the mobile food distributions of "Gleaners". Gleaners is a member of Feeding America and works in partnership with other organizations to identify Indianapolis neighborhoods most affected by food insecurity.

At St. Anthony's in North Beach, Maryland, the volunteers have a partnership with "Farming 4 Hunger" and the Maryland Food Bank. From July to October, the Maryland Food Bank distributes products once a month. The volunteers then organize a distribution of food in church park lots. Once customers have registered, they can go from table to table and choose what their families need. At each event, from 5-6,000 lbs (2.5-3,000 kilos) of products are distributed. Last summer, they distributed more than 23,000 lbs (11,500 kilos) of products to about 50 households, representing more than 1,300 people.

## **Actions taken**

In addition to this, AIC-United States has organized:

- New training for its members on these issues.
- Monthly discussions with other members of the Vincentian Family in the United States, as part of its advocacy on issues of social justice, including the environment and ecology. It publishes these discussions on its website and in its Newsletter.
- A campaign to encourage volunteers to act by contacting senators and representatives and informing them of the position of Catholics on these issues. In addition, in 2015, AIC-USA adopted a Declaration of Support for the encyclical "Laudato Si - on the safeguarding of the Common Home" and volunteers signed a petition for the World Catholic Movement for Climate.

## **Future prospects and/or assessment of impact on sustainable development**

The AIC volunteers wish to continue and improve the project. In Indiana, volunteer Mary Nell Williams, says "it would be more interesting if beneficiaries received recipes and other information on how to use and prepare fruits and vegetables distributed".

She also noticed that sometimes beneficiaries are persuaded to take more products than they ask for, what they need or what they can reasonably consume before the products get spoiled. Volunteers act with great love and generosity but it is important to be aware that beneficiaries know what they will use and what the reasonable amount is for them. The volunteers plan to continue their volunteer collaboration with Gleaners next summer.