



TRAINING BOOKLET N°28: MAY 2018

PRIORITY LINES OF ACTION

1. Introduction

When we speak about **Priority Lines of Action (PLA)**, we mean that these are the lines of action along which we suggest orienting our common work within AIC as more than 100,000 volunteers across the world. We establish them during our International Assemblies, to which we invite representatives from the 53 countries on 4 continents that together form the **International Association of Charities (AIC)**.

Drafting Priority Lines of Action (previously known as Operational Guidelines) is an excellent idea that began during the Assembly in Assisi in 1990 and has continued up to the present day.

This topic is important and so it will be the subject of the training reflections for the months of May and June 2018. In this first reflection, we will recall the different stages we have been through so far and how we have evolved in the implementation of our actions on behalf of people who are more vulnerable and marginalised because they live in situations of poverty.

2. A Brief History of our Journey so far

First Stage: From Assistance to Participation (1973-1985)

Second Stage: From Participation to Self-Promotion (1985-2002)

- **1990, Assisi – First Priority Lines of Action** (previously Operational Guidelines): Self-promotion, solidarity, training and communication
- **1994, Antigua – PLA: A culture of solidarity and self-Promotion**

- **1998, Querétaro – PLA:** Be a force of transformation in the face of poverty, in society and in the Association

Third Stage: From Self-Promotion to Co-responsibility and Empowerment (2002-2011)

- **2002, Nice – LAP:** Social co-responsibility, institutional strengthening, empowerment
- **2005, Santo Domingo –** Key words for our work: Political action, coherency and trust
- **2007, Rome and 2009 Mexico City – LAP:**
 1. Accompany women towards a personal change and an awareness of responsibility.
 2. In AIC, strengthen our commitment to the poverty of women.
 3. In society, give people and authorities a sense of responsibility.

Fourth Stage: From Co-responsibility to Coeducation (2011-2020)

- **2011, El Escorial and 2013, Bangkok – LAP:** Education, a two-way process
- **2015, Guatemala – LAP:**
 1. Promoting **education** as a two-way process based on the strengths of each one and on the principles of Social Justice.
 2. Reinforcing our Vincentian identity while preparing to celebrate our 400th anniversary.
- **2017, Châtillon**

The **Priority Lines of Action** put forward at the Assembly in Châtillon in 2017 are also focused on Education, but we will speak about them in the next Training Reflection in June 2018.

Why Education?

Because at AIC we are convinced that **education is the most important means of eradicating poverty** and that it generates change both in volunteers and in people living in poverty, helping them to grow, become independent, achieve their full potential and become active agents in their own development.

What is education? When we speak about education, we understand it as a person’s growth in every dimension. Let us remember that St Vincent, with his vocabulary of the 17th century asked us **“to accompany corporally and spiritually”** with an **“affective and effective”** love towards the people around us.

For St Vincent, education is closely linked with human development. A long time before human rights were enacted and established, Vincent de Paul struggled relentlessly to

ensure that the poor, who had no rights to anything and never received even the slightest consideration from a contemptuous and unsympathetic society, could live in dignity.

It is also important to note that Saint Vincent, through his personal experience, discovered that **the poor are our school**, an irreplaceable source from which we can learn lessons for life and work. **“The poor are our lords and masters”**. With them we learn the ways to respond to the calls of charity and justice. In the difficult life of the poor we are called to discover, learn and appreciate God’s wisdom and from this undertake educational work.

3. Acting in conformity with our Priority Lines of Action

It is necessary to develop the **educational dimension** in all our work with people living in vulnerable situations. We must work within a dynamic of reciprocity and our actions should be educational. At AIC, the **Priority Lines of Action** help us to energise our Vincentian work and bring it up to date. These guidelines should be studied, reflected upon and adopted, they are a light that enables us to carry out our service better, they give us a horizon that requires personal and community **change** and they propose new attitudes, methods and perspectives for our work.

AIC’s Suggestion for Reflection

1. In your life as volunteers have you had the opportunity to experience a change that education (or training) has produced in you or in any of the people living in poverty with whom you work? Share your experiences.
2. Name at least 3 things that you have learned during your experience of working with people living in poverty.
3. Are you familiar with the Priority Lines of Action and their evolution since we began using them in 1990? Have you applied them in your group? How?



TRAINING BOOKLET N°28: JUNE 2018

PRIORITY LINES OF ACTION

(Part II)

The Priority Lines of Action that emerged from the International Assembly (Châtillon, 2017) and that will guide AIC's activity until the year 2020, are the following:

1. To promote through education holistic human development for the care of our Common Home.
2. To strengthen our Vincentian identity
3. To encourage responsibility and service in leadership

Explanation:

1. To promote through education holistic human development for the care of our **Common Home** personally and in our activities as AIC members, attempting to maintain a harmonious balance:
 - **With God:** in order to achieve this there is a need to develop a spirituality centered on Jesus Christ, evangelizer of the poor. This means opening ourselves to the movement of the Holy Spirit in order to discover, on a daily basis, the will of God as revealed in the signs of the times and in the events of our daily life.
 - **Among people:** with all people, especially with those men and women living in situations of poverty and with those with whom we have on-going contact... discovering how to recognize Jesus Christ in those individuals and learning how to respond to their needs (listening to them and living in solidarity with them). We must not forget to maintain **close and fraternal** relations with the members of our AIC group.
 - **With nature:** Pope Francis has questioned us about the manner in which we protect our planet. We recall that in his encyclical *Laudato Si*, (published in June

2015) he exhorted humankind to become more aware of the need to safeguard our Common Home (Training Reflections: February, March and April 2018).

2. **To strengthen our Vincentian identity** by grounding ourselves on the values of our Founders and by continually seeking to develop those elements which will allow us to serve our sisters and brothers in a more effective manner. AIC views formation as a process that is never concluded and that is why we have been very careful with regards to our spiritual, Vincentian and human formation. Vincent de Paul saw an intimate bond between **love** of God and love of neighbor. Love is what moved Vincent to act and we know that the poor were his true passion. Vincentian spirituality is rooted in the gospel... following the example of Christ and living the gospel when encountering the poor were fundamental tasks that Vincent de Paul willingly embraced. Indeed, the poor were the object of all of his thoughts and actions.

3. **To encourage responsibility and service in leadership**, attentive to the need for good communication. In accordance with the 2011 Priority Lines of Action, based on the need for **education** and on-going formation, the AIC International Training Team initiated an ambitious program in 2014, the AIC Diploma. Among the reasons for the initiation of this program were the wish to **develop the leadership and professionalism of the AIC volunteers**.

The program was designed to provide spiritual, human and Vincentian formation to the members and was also designed to provide the members with tools that would enable them to acquire further knowledge in the area of developing projects, obtaining funding for projects, social communication and strategic planning. About one thousand volunteers from Latin America have participated in this program. This material has been translated into English and studied by a pilot group composed of volunteers from the United Kingdom, the United States, France and Madagascar. Later this same material was translated into French and at the present time about one hundred members from Europe and Asia are involved in this program which is now offered in English, French and Spanish.

In our efforts to **promote responsible and service oriented leadership**, we would like to share with you the fact that our members in the United States have developed a well-structured program for the formation of lay spiritual advisors. Meanwhile in Cochabamba, Bolivia, there was a seminar on this theme in March 2018 in which sixty-four members from eighteen Latin American countries participated. The participants deepened their understanding of the formational program that

Colombia has developed for lay spiritual advisors... a program that we hope to utilize throughout the American continent.

It is important to point out that leadership is not simply a privilege but also a responsibility and a service.

AIC's Suggestion for Reflection

1. How can we develop these Priority Lines of Action in our present work on behalf of those who are living in situations of poverty?
2. What changes are necessary in order to make our work better, in order to work in accordance with the above Lines of Action?
3. What initiatives, activities or projects can AIC volunteers take on (personally and/or as a group) in order to apply the work and the commitment in the area of education to our specific reality?
4. We invite you to develop a plan (concrete activities, dates and people responsible for each step of the process) so that the Lines of Action are applied to all your activities.