

With Saint Vincent



1617 - 2017

**AIC 400**

We build together  
to bring hope to life

# **The AIC Charter 2017**

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# AIC Charter

## Introduction

AIC, Association Internationale des Charités, (International Association of Charities) is an **INGO**.

It is an **international network** bringing together groups of Christian volunteers inspired by the charism of Saint Vincent de Paul, its founder.

**The aim of this network, mainly formed of women, is to combat forms of poverty at the local level.**

**And to involve public authorities in this fight against poverty.**

AIC groups have a two-fold legal identity:

- A civil identity as NGOs recognised in their own country.
- A canonical identity subject to canon law. Every local AIC group is, under canon law, an “association of lay people”. This means its constitution is officially “approved” by the competent ecclesiastical authority.

AIC International itself is constituted as a “juridical person”, according to Belgian law:

**The Constitution** (1985) determines the way AIC works. It can be consulted on our website.

**The By-Laws** (1985) determine the principles and ethics of collaboration, and the rights and duties of members.

The **Canonical Statutes** (2007) confirm our organisation as a faithful movement of lay people.

Saint Vincent and his successors received from the Holy See, by Apostolic Privilege (C 312 § 2), permission to establish parish-based or inter-parish Confraternities of Charity. Later on, local groups were organised into national and international associations (AIC) with different names according to the countries.

AIC belongs to the Vincentian Family, formed of all the associations founded by Saint Vincent de Paul himself, or those inspired by his work. The Vincentian Family has over 2 million members around the world.

# Chapter 1: AIC's Identity

- **Our Origins**
- The Motivations for our Action
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## The Origins

On 20th August 1617 in Châtillon-les-Dombes (France), Vincent de Paul, the parish priest, appealed for help for a family in need. The priest quickly realised that the overflowing generosity that resulted from his call had to be organised, to make it effective, and so he founded the first group of "Charities".

On 8 December 1617, the bishop of Lyons, Msgr Denis Simon de Marquemont, handed to Monsieur Vincent the decree recognizing the new Association of Charity and its rule.

"Monsieur Vincent's" choice: Evangelisation of the poor, and action on behalf of the deprived: this was the two-fold, dominating purpose of the life of Monsieur Vincent. Charity for him was the vocation to serve the most humble of people, the abandoned, those afflicted by physical and spiritual misery.

To love means to feel responsible. Thus he took every initiative he could to alleviate the miseries of the people he met.

The Charities spread, and in 1629 Saint Vincent asked Louise de Marillac to coordinate them and visit the groups. Saint Vincent realised the difficulties the ladies of Charity would meet, given the rigours of life in service of ever-increasing numbers of poor people.

In order to provide support, he joined a new company of women with Louise de Marillac, living a new Rule, outside the cloister, in the service of the poor: the Daughters of Charity. These were formed as a "Company" in 1633, led by Louise de Marillac. So "the ladies and the daughters" complemented each other in their vocation and their service, following the inspiration of their joint Founder.

**Founded in 1617 as a way of making overflowing generosity effective**

**Dual aim: evangelise and be responsible in the face of other people's poverty.**

**The lay Ladies work side by side...**

**...with the Daughters of Charity**

After Vatican II, the international organisation was strengthened by the creation of an international association in Belgium.

**1970: Creation of AIC**

**Questions to reflect on in groups:**

- 1. AIC International is present in 53 countries and has been in existence for nearly 400 years; what does the fact you belong to this association bring you, how does this motivate you in your voluntary work?**
- 2. Particular circumstances inspired Saint Vincent in the creation of the first groups of Charities, what forms of poverty invite us to pursue the mission that he has entrusted to us today?**
- 3. How do we propose to change the unfair circumstances experienced by those living in poverty today?**

## **Chapter I: AIC's Identity**

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### **The Motivations for our Action**

**A Commitment as Citizens:**

**A commitment to the poor**

Poverty affects the person's fundamental right to take part in his or her own destiny: *"Insecurity is the lack of one or more of the foundational needs allowing people and families to take on their basic responsibilities and enjoy their fundamental rights."*

Source: UN, Economic and Social Committee, 2006.

70% of poor people are women.

**A Christian Commitment:**

**Like all the baptised, a commitment to following Christ**

"Whatever you do to the least among you, you do it to me." The Church lives by its **preferential love for the poor**. The Church is the place where all who suffer: the poor, the destitute, the unhappy, the sick, prisoners, the hungry, must find rest. Its mission is to tell all those people: "Come to me..." (Mt 11: 28).

**Poverty: an injustice**

**Making visible a lack of fraternity**

**Following Christ: the Church, a place of welcome for the marginalised.**

**'The programme of the Christian is**

Poverty is not just material poverty. Benedict XVI speaks of “marginalisation, affective, moral and spiritual poverty”, of those “whose interior lives are disorientated” (Benedict XVI, *World Day of Peace*, 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009).

**A Commitment to Following St Vincent:**

1. Serving the Poor as Christ did

Christ is a master, a teaching, he is the example; the Son leads us to the Father. Christ first and foremost bridges relationships, he links us to the Father and invites us to let ourselves be transformed by the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. Saint Vincent was marked by the spirituality of Pierre de Bérulle. For him, **Christians are those who experience a relationship with Christ, and so who allow Christ to inhabit them and act upon them.**

There are 3 dimensions to this:

Faith: Confidence in one person, Christ

Prayer: An intimate relationship with Christ which determines action

Action: Active life

2. Serving Christ through the Poor

A person living in poverty allows us to discover the first sufferer, Jesus Christ, “The poor are our masters, they are our kings”.

The pyramid is reversed, the rich and powerful in this world are those called to serve.

**This allows us to:**

- **Be ready to listen to others** both when working in a team and in our own actions.
- **Recognise our own vulnerability** and our limits to be able to understand those of others.
- **Live in an austere Vincentian way**, showing that this lifestyle is possible.

**A commitment which gives women a place in society:**

The work of AIC members with 20,000 women in positions of responsibility shows that across all cultures women can take on responsibilities in the world. This is a testimony to what John Paul II called “the genius of women”. (Letter to Women, No 10, 1995)

It is not a matter of claiming that men and women are independent and self-sufficient. That would risk enclosing them in a utopian or even aggressive self-realisation. Nothing would be further from Christian faith. “An essentially female movement” is a way of explaining the service we give: Given the marginalisation of women

**“a heart that sees.” DCE (No. 31)**

**St Vincent would say “What would Christ do if he were in my place?”**

**For St Vincent, serving the poor was the fruit of an intensely spiritual life**

**Accompany the poorest people spiritually and materially**

**Be ready to listen**

**In an essentially female movement**

**“You are the mothers of the poor”  
St Vincent de Paul**

through poverty and violence, a first response from women themselves may be easier to accept.

**A commitment which gives women a place in the Church:**

The Church is faithful to the Gospel, and does not see women as following in the apostolic succession. They have another role, as demonstrated by women such as Mother Theresa, Louise de Marillac, Elisabeth Seton and Hildegard de Bingen, as well as so many other unknown women working in the shadows. St Vincent said to the first Ladies of Charity: *For around 800 years women have had no public role in the Church, and...*

*...see how Providence itself is now speaking to some of you."*

**Questions to reflect on in groups:**

1. How does being aware of the existence of so much social injustice around you motivate you in your work as a volunteer?
2. Given the teachings of Christ and Saint Vincent de Paul, how do you try to be consistent in your personal life?
3. What practical actions could you carry out, alone or in a group, to fulfil your commitment to accord a place to women in society?

# Chapter I: AIC's Identity

- Our Origins
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## The Profile of AIC Volunteers

<p>Whatever the status of the volunteer: full member, associate member or collaborator, volunteering at AIC has its requirements and demands for a commitment to be made.</p> <p><b><u>Committed volunteers:</u></b> Commitment is freely given, it takes account of each person's motivations, capabilities and availability in terms of health and time. This means that the continuity and efficiency of the action taken can be ensured.</p> <p><b><u>Generous volunteers:</u></b> Volunteering is unpaid, and does not seek any affective or moral gratification (freely given help does not prevent the repayment of personal expenses incurred in voluntary action).</p> <p><b><u>Responsible volunteers:</u></b> Responsibility is an obligation to do what one has promised to do. It leads directly to trust in the members of our group, the people being supported and partner organisations.</p> <p><b><u>Competent volunteers:</u></b> AIC volunteers accept on-going training adapted to their action. Amateurism is all the more dangerous as the work is carried out with vulnerable people. Individual or particular actions, or even emotional involvement, can only partially reduce the problems.</p> <p><b><u>Volunteers rooted in Saint Vincent's project:</u></b> AIC is the place where, in the light of the Gospel, volunteers work to change situations of poverty; they follow in the footsteps of their founder, St Vincent: <i>"support the poorest people spiritually and materially"</i>.</p>	<p><b>A commitment to continuity and efficiency</b></p> <p><b>selfless</b></p> <p><b>responsible</b></p> <p><b>well trained</b></p> <p><b>based on Vincentian spirituality</b></p>
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## Working as a Team

<p><b>Meaning and Method</b></p> <p><i>The group unites its strengths around a common project; the key moment is the team meeting.</i></p> <p>Saint Vincent united the goodwill of many in order to help <b>one</b> family living in poverty. He knew that one person alone wouldn't be enough.</p> <p><u>Working as a team:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Multiplies strengths: everyone contributes their time, energy and personal qualities.</li> <li>– Guarantees that the action will continue in the long term.</li> </ul> <p><u>To work as a team, members require:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Respect:</b> Every point of view is legitimate and completes the others</li> <li>– <b>Coordination:</b> Everyone has a clearly defined role</li> <li>– <b>Communication:</b> In confidence</li> <li>– <b>Commitment:</b> From everyone, according to what has been planned.</li> </ul> <p><u>Team meetings are:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The moment when <b>communication</b> is privileged: A place for everyone to stay informed and have their say. Solutions are found to difficulties encountered by the team and future activities are organised.</li> <li>– A place for <b>revitalisation and progress:</b> Together we situate our actions in St Vincent's spirituality. In this way we enter into a process of continuous conversion – conversion through little things – it is a question of being open to changing our attitudes.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teams, communities of faith, communion, work, sharing and friendship.</b></p> <p><i>“They will be united among themselves like sisters that our Lord has linked through his love”.</i> St Vincent de Paul</p> <p><i>“What would Christ do if he were in my place?”</i></p>
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## The Organisation of the AIC Network

<p><b>Local groups:</b> <b>Over 5100 local AIC groups</b> have their own juridical status governed by statutes, led by a president and a board of management.</p> <p>These local groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Work in a limited geographical area: a district, town, city or parish;</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Respond to calls from those in situations of distress in their surrounding area, with appropriate actions.</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Local</b></p>
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# Chapter II

## AIC's Mission

- **AIC's Vision and Mission**
- **The Foundations of AIC's Mission**
  - **The Gospel**
  - **St Vincent's values**
  - The Social Doctrine of the Church
- AIC's Journey

### AIC's Mission and Vision

<p><b>Vision</b></p> <p>AIC intends to be a Christian transformative force in society, to give priority to involvement with women around the world, through projects and actions that include the participation of the beneficiaries.</p> <p>AIC carries out local activities, collaborates on a local and global level, participates in networks and involves itself in public political programmes or in civil society.</p> <p><b>Mission</b></p> <p><b>Following the teachings of the Church and the example of Saint Vincent de Paul:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To fight against all forms of poverty and exclusion, through transformative initiatives and projects;</li><li>• To work with our brothers and sisters living in situations of poverty, encouraging the discovery of everyone's individual strengths, supporting education and promoting a decent life;</li><li>• To denounce injustice and put pressure on civil society structures and decision-makers to fight the causes of poverty.</li></ul>	
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<p><i>and the poor... everyone is attracted by simple people, speaking with sincerity” (SV:XI:462).</i></p> <p><b>Humility</b> (Mt 11:29): <i>“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls”.</i></p> <p>St Vincent tells us: <i>“If we are told “Who goes there? Humility! Let that be our watchword.” (Coste XII, 203). “Leave God to find God. The poor evangelise us by their presence alone”, and they are our lords and masters (SV:IXA:120) whom we ought to love with tenderness and deep respect. “It seems that the poor man only receives, because he is in distress. And yet, he gives us his ability to receive.”</i></p> <p><b>Charity</b> (Mt 7:12): St Vincent tells us: <i>“When charity dwells in a soul, it takes full possession of all its powers: it gives it no rest, it’s a fire that is constantly active” (SV:XI:132) “Charity cannot remain idle, it must push us to procure salvation and consolation for others” (SV:XII:265).</i></p> <p>This has an interpersonal dimension, which is respect for the other, a community and political dimension - in that human beings are fulfilled through belonging to a human organisation - and a religious dimension - universal love, without measure (Mt 5:43), selfless (Lk 14:12-14) and truly willing to serve (Mt 20:25-28).</p>	<p><b>Humility in your encounters with others.</b></p> <p><b>“The poor person gives us his ability to receive”</b></p> <p><b>Charity: Loving our neighbour as ourselves</b></p>
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**Questions to reflect on in groups:**

- 1. How do you live AIC’s mission in your group? Do you have the impression that you aren’t putting certain aspects into practice? If so, which ones?**
- 2. How do you bring the desire to look for Christ to life in your service with others (or in your Vincentian mission) to *follow* him, until *meeting* him and *remaining* with him?**
- 3. Give some concrete examples of the way in which you each live by the Vincentian values (simplicity, humility and charity) in your group and on a personal level.**

## Chapter II AIC's Mission

- AIC's Vision and Mission
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### The Foundations of AIC's Mission

<p><b><i>The Church's Social Doctrine</i></b></p> <p>Saint Vincent truly loved the Church, while still recognizing her faults and failings. He always thought that the community of believers was called to holiness and to perfection in the Christian life. For him, this perfection lay in charity and <i>"practical holiness, always and in everything doing the will of God"</i>. (Coste XII, p. 150, n. 199).</p> <p>What we now call the Church's Social Doctrine has been in the course of development since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The encyclical Octogesima Adveniens (written for the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first social encyclical <i>Rerum Novarum</i> by Pope Leo) tells us: <i>"It is up to the Christian communities to analyse with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words... and, in dialogue with our Christian brothers and sisters and all women and men of goodwill, to determine the options and commitments to be made in order to bring about the transformations that seem urgent and necessary"</i> (Oct. Adv. 3-4).</p> <p>The Church's Social Doctrine proclaims the <b>truth</b> of the love of Christ that is always new. The Encyclical <i>Deus Caritas</i> (God is love) expresses for today <b>the essential elements of Christian charity</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"Immediate need (Good Samaritan) met by professional competence and heartfelt concern;</i></li> <li>• <i>Independent of parties and ideologies;</i></li> <li>• <i>Charity cannot be used at the service of what is now called proselytism. Love is free"</i> (DC 31).</li> </ul> <p>For Benedict XVI, justice and charity belong to <b>two different spheres, which are nonetheless related</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Justice</b> is the primary task of the State: the building of a just order of society and of the State, through which each person receives their due, is a fundamental duty, which each</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>3rd Source:</u></b></p> <p><b>Saint Vincent loved the Church</b></p> <p><b>The Church's Social Doctrine: bringing the message of Christ up to date</b></p> <p><b>Experience on the ground feeds the reflection of the Church</b></p> <p><b>Justice and Charity - 2 paths to achieve this:</b></p>
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<p>generation has to confront in its turn. Charity does not take the place of justice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Organised charitable activity</b> is true humanism, which recognises the image of God in human beings and wants to bring them to lead a life in conformity with this dignity (DC 30b). Love is needed beyond justice and is irreplaceable (DC 28b).</li> </ul> <p>Underlying justice and charity are two basic principles: <b>unconditional respect for human life and the dignity of every human person</b>. From these arise the other proposals for a more just society.</p> <p><b>Five principles</b> are named among those in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004, Ch4) needed to organise a society that is at the service of the person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>The common good:</b> <i>“The common good means the set of social conditions that allow social groups and their individual members thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment”</i> (GS 26 § 1; cf. GS 74 § 1).</li> <li>▪ <b>The universal destination of goods:</b> In the end everything belongs to God. We are only temporary stewards.</li> <li>▪ <b>Subsidiarity:</b> The Church considers that decisions must as far as possible be taken by the people who will feel their possible consequences. This principle, also called the “principle of help”, which states that it is an error that goes against morality and charity to let something be done at too high a level when it can it be done at a lower level as by doing so, we will deprive the lower level of everything it can do.</li> <li>▪ <b>Participation:</b> As a consequence of the previous principle, each person must be able to take part in making decisions that concern him or her. This is not a vague or simply democratic idea. It is a principle that is deeply rooted in the definition of the human being personally loved by God.</li> <li>▪ <b>Solidarity:</b> This is a consequence of the four previous pillars. Human beings are called to be at one with each other, so that they can help those who are less skilful, less knowledgeable or have fewer resources. Everyone is at the service of everyone else, but especially of the poorest people. By being with the poorest, as Christ was, we become a Christian society.</li> </ul>	<p><b>The action of the State responsible for justice</b></p> <p><b>Organized charitable work</b></p> <p><b>The essentials:</b> Each human being is personally loved by God</p> <p><b>All are equal in dignity</b></p> <p><b>The five principles:</b></p> <p><b>The common good</b></p> <p><b>The universal destination of goods</b></p> <p><b>Subsidiarity</b></p> <p><b>Participation</b></p> <p><b>Solidarity</b></p> <p><b>The preferential option for the poor</b></p>
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**Questions to reflect on in groups:**

- 1. How does the Church's Social Doctrine affect our commitment as AIC volunteers?**
- 2. What elements of Christian charity were expressed by Benedict XVI? How do these definitions help you in your AIC work?**
- 3. Reflect on the five principles of the Church's Social Doctrine and note your comments.**





<p><b>Systemic Change (2007):</b> This method, suggested by the Vincentian Family, invites us to see each person, not as an isolated individual, but as an individual surrounded by all their family, social, professional relationships. This involves changing viewpoint, defining with the person concerned the goal, the “dream” that they wish to achieve, and then, along with them, seeing which relationship, which link they can change. At that moment, the whole of the “system” in which the person lives will change.</p> <p><b>At each of these stages, AIC has made a firm commitment in favour of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Improving the situation of women:</b> Since 1980 AIC has been doing significant work to denounce injustice against women, to defend their rights and to fight against all the forms of violence of which they are victims. In 2001 in Fortaleza (Brazil), AIC created and distributed a “Manifesto against violence towards women”.</li> <li>▪ <b>Reducing the poverty of women in different cultures (2007):</b> Our actions and projects are rooted in the various cultures that form the international profile of AIC and it seems vital <b>to understand how the cultural values and traditions of a society influence the role of women and men, and create or aggravate the poverty of women.</b> We are convinced that each woman has the capacity to impel her own culture to grow, and to find in it the resources to construct her life project. How? Above all, by developing places for women to speak, by <b>education</b> for a better balance of roles among men and women, by training in human rights, especially those of women and by working in a network on projects to improve women’s circumstances.</li> <li>▪ <b>Education (2011-2015)</b> as a means to prevent poverty. Saint Vincent said that education is one of the most valuable tools to achieve “<i>dignity for the poor</i>”. The person living in poverty is a social player in their own right. If they are given the opportunity to develop their own abilities, they can take the place and role that belong to every human person.</li> </ul> <p>The <b>educational project</b> does not consist of a vertical, passive transmission of knowledge. It is as much about <b>learning from the other</b> as <b>allowing the other to learn</b>. “<i>The teacher learns while teaching, the learner teaches while learning.</i>” (Paulo Freire).</p> <p>We need each other to build a more just society together. This is why education must be present and a driving force in any charitable action by AIC, to promote the establishment of a fair and interdependent society.</p>	<p><b>Systemic change, a new way of looking to understand situations of poverty</b></p> <p><b>Using the present as a lever for the future</b></p> <p><b>Raising awareness and preventing injustice against women</b></p> <p><b>Women and poverty in diverse cultures</b></p> <p><b>Making women aware of their dignity and their rights</b></p> <p><i>“The more women are educated and their rights are recognised, the less their children are hungry”</i> O. de Schutter, UN</p> <p>A two-way exchange <i>“have a heart that sees with the eyes of God”</i>, Pope Benedict XVI</p> <p><b>Contributive justice</b></p>
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<p>AIC is on the road, on a never-ending journey...</p> <p>Following Saint Vincent, let us be fascinated, captivated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By the love of Christ towards the poorest;</li> <li>• By his way of putting the “little ones” in the centre: <i>“What do you want me to do for you?”</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Only the strength born of conviction that God is love, communion and justice can build “another possible world” of peace, solidarity, justice and freedom.</b></p>	<p><b>The enchantment of the love of God for the little ones.</b></p>
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**Questions to reflect on in groups:**

1. **What are the essential elements of AIC’s participation in improving the situation of women?**
2. **How does AIC commit to improving the situation of women?**
3. **What role does education play in the prevention of poverty?**

# Chapter III

## AIC Today

- **AIC's Grassroots Actions**
- **Advocacy**
- Training Volunteers
- Communication
- Finances and Code of Ethics
- Legal Framework

### AIC's Grassroots Actions

<p>Over <b>13,000 actions or projects to tackle poverty</b> are currently being carried out by volunteers from across the AIC network. The main objective is to support people living in poverty to help them obtain more independence and dignity.</p> <p><b>Our strengths and priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locally-based volunteers who set up the projects and work in teams.</li> <li>• Special attention to poverty among women and children. They are the most affected by poverty and represent 80% of our beneficiaries.</li> <li>• Offering people holistic support.</li> <li>• Building social links to get people out of isolation.</li> <li>• Priority to education, an essential tool in the fight against poverty, especially that of women. For adults, this could be literacy projects, professional training aiming for reintegration into the job market through income generating activities, or educational workshops. For children, there are often daycare centres, preschool centres, refresher courses, school bursaries and homework clubs.</li> </ul> <p>The <b>participation of beneficiaries</b> is an essential element in the development of empowering projects. How is this done? By valuing people's strengths and their own abilities to respond to the challenges they encounter, so as to be able to dream and act together to change the situation of poverty, adopting a '<b>facilitator</b>' attitude.</p> <p>Thanks to the AIC network, <b>twinnings between AIC teams</b> all over the world allow special relationships to be established in a culture of solidarity: financial support, exchange of experiences, two-way training and co-management of projects.</p>	<p><b>Aiming for independence and dignity</b></p> <p><b>Locally-based</b></p> <p><b>Women</b></p> <p><b>Human at the centre</b></p> <p><b>Rebuilding social links</b></p> <p><b>Participation of beneficiaries</b></p> <p><b>Being a 'facilitator'</b></p> <p><b>Twinnings</b></p>
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## Advocacy

<p>As a civil society organisation, AIC takes part in global networks where the efforts of public and private bodies are combined and interact. Through its presence among these institutions, AIC is in touch with a process of international reflection and receives information that contributes to its growth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>At the public level</b>, AIC is an INGO (International Non-Governmental Organisation) and has representatives with European and international bodies:</li> </ul> <p>It has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Special Consultative Status with <i>ECOSOC – UN Economic and Social Council</i></li> <li>– Operational Status with <i>UNESCO – United Nation’s Council for Education, the Sciences, Culture and Communication</i>.</li> <li>– Consultative Status with the <i>Council of Europe</i></li> </ul> <p>AIC is a member of <b>international networks</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Participates in Catholic Centres of international agencies</li> <li>– EAPN – European Anti-Poverty Network</li> <li>– WURN (Women’s United Nations Report Program &amp; Network)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the <b>Universal Church</b>, AIC is an Association of Lay Faithful which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Is recognised by the Pontifical Council for the Laity</li> <li>– Is a member of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum (for Human and Christian development)</li> <li>– Is a member of Crescendo – Network for human and Christian ageing</li> <li>– Is one of the ICOs (International Catholic Organisations) and attends their Conference (ICOC)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Giving people in need a voice at international level</b></p> <p>Institutional representation:</p> <p><b>ECOSOC</b> <b>UNESCO</b> <b>Council of Europe</b></p> <p>Representation within networks:</p> <p><b>Catholic Centres</b> <b>EAPN</b> <b>WURN</b></p> <p>Within the Church:</p> <p><b>Pontifical Council for the Laity</b> <b>Cor Unum</b> <b>Crescendo</b> <b>OIC</b></p>
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**Questions to reflect on in groups:**

1. Among the strengths and priorities mentioned above, which can be found in the grassroots actions of your local group?
2. What do you think are the advantages of twinnings between AIC groups? (You can respond based on your own experiences or reflect on the possibility of setting up a twinning with another AIC group. In this case, please don’t hesitate to ask for further information from the International Secretariat).

- 3. Why does the presence of AIC in international networks and within the Church seem so important?**
- 4. As an INGO (International Non-Governmental Organisation), AIC is part of the civil society network. How can AIC work on behalf of those in need within this network?**



<p>to carry out organised work and coordinate themselves effectively within their groups;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing the knowledge and the ability of the volunteers with regard to the development of projects, fundraising, social communication and strategic planning;</li> <li>• Developing leadership and professionalism among our AIC members.</li> </ul>	
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## Communication

<p><b>Communication and Visibility</b></p> <p>AIC highlights the importance of <b>internal and external</b> communication in order to develop the projects and the activities of the Association.</p> <p><b>Internally</b>, communication is <b>fundamental</b> in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Training</b> the volunteers;</li> <li>• <b>Exchanging their experiences and knowledge</b>;</li> <li>• <b>Spreading AIC's message and image</b> both within and outside of the Association.</li> </ul> <p><b>In its external relations</b>, <b>AIC's image</b> is constructed on the basis of the work that groups carry out with people living in poverty. This is the work that gives the association <b>credibility</b>.</p> <p>Moreover, the actions undertaken are presented with total <b>transparency</b>, as is the way that the donations have been used to implement these actions.</p> <p>This credibility should allow AIC to continue its Christian and social mission and to attract new volunteers, donors and partners. Therefore, above all else, the name AIC ought to be associated with the idea of credibility.</p> <p><b>Concrete means to achieve visibility</b></p> <p>The present means such as the website and Facebook page help us to communicate with one another and to communicate to others what we are doing. These tools are utilized by AIC International as well as by many national and local groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.aic-international.org">www.aic-international.org</a></li> <li>▪ <b>Facebook page:</b> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/AIC-International-713564958772833/">www.facebook.com/AIC-International-713564958772833/</a></li> </ul>	<p><b>Communication and Visibility</b></p> <p><b>A fundamental tool</b></p> <p><b>Values</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Credibility</b></li> <li>– <b>Transparency</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Website</b></p> <p><b>Facebook page</b></p>
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**Questions to reflect on in groups:**

- 1. For what reasons does on-going training seem important to you as you go about your day-to-day Vincentian work?**
- 2. What have you taken away from the training that you have received recently from AIC International?**
- 3. List some of the activities that your group utilizes in order to enhance both its internal and external communication.**

# Chapter III

## AIC Today

- AIC's Grassroots Actions
- Advocacy
- Training Volunteers
- Communication
- **Finances**
- **Legal Framework**
- **Code of Ethics**

### Finances

<p>The <b>activities of local groups</b> are financed by the annual dues of their members and by the donations that the groups seek from private donors or public bodies in the vicinity.</p> <p>The <b>volunteers</b>, AIC members, also contribute to funding the work by offering the association their time and putting their skills to its service.</p> <p><b>AIC International</b> is financed by the annual dues of the member associations, as well as by donations from individuals or different bodies. However these financial resources are extremely important for carrying out grassroots actions.</p> <p><b>Paying the annual dues</b> has deep value: it is the sign of our desire to contribute, through a gesture of <b>solidarity</b>, to the life of the association. It is also a commitment to collective responsibility and above all it is a symbol of <b>belonging</b>. For this reason paying the annual dues has a different meaning than simply giving money.</p> <p>A donation, even if it is necessary for the life of the association, can just be a sign of appreciation for the work being carried out and does not imply a personal commitment. The annual dues, on the other hand, express the decision to belong to the association and to take on the responsibility of this commitment.</p>	<p><b>Finance:</b></p> <p><b>A means of action</b></p> <p><b>The annual dues:</b></p> <p><b>A symbol of belonging</b></p> <p><b>and commitment</b></p>
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### Legal Framework

<p>AIC groups have a dual legal identity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A civil identity as recognised NGOs in their own country</li> </ul>	<p><b>Dual identity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil</li> <li>• Ecclesial</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An ecclesial identity, subject to canonical norms. AIC is, under Canon Law, an “association of the faithful”. This means that its Constitution is officially approved by the competent ecclesiastical authority.</li> </ul> <p>AIC is constituted as a “legal person”: it is an international not-for-profit organisation.</p> <p><b>The Constitution</b> (1985) and its subsequent modifications define:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The objectives being pursued and the activities being implemented to achieve them;</li> <li>• The operation of the association and the hierarchy between the powers;</li> <li>• The rights and responsibilities of the members</li> </ul> <p>(It can be consulted on our website)</p> <p><b>The By-Laws</b> (1985) complete the constitution and are only imposed on members. They enact an ethic of collaboration.</p> <p><b>The Canonical Statutes</b> (2007) confirm that AIC is movement of the lay faithful.</p> <p>Saint Vincent and his successors received the power to canonically erect parish or interparish Confraternities of Charity from the Holy See through Apostolic Privilege (C312 §2). Later the local groups were organised into national associations with different names according to the country and an international association (AIC).</p>	<p><b>Constitution</b></p> <p><b>By-Laws</b></p> <p><b>Canonical Statutes</b></p>
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## Code of Ethics

<p>Governance according to Saint Vincent implies promoting the values of rigorousness, fairness, integrity, transparency and efficiency;</p> <p>A clear legal framework and a balance of power allow for transparency and proper management of money that is the property of those living in poverty.</p> <p>The rules that the association has given itself, its evangelical values and the vision and method of Saint Vincent direct our behaviour as partners at the service of the most disadvantaged, with respect to both them and the donors.</p>	<p><b>Total transparency in the management of the “goods of the most disadvantaged”</b></p>
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**Questions to reflect on in groups:**

- 1. Do you consider the payment of the annual dues to be a gesture of solidarity and a sign of belonging to AIC? Knowing what the dues are used for, do you pay them with pleasure?**
- 2. What do the members of your group think about the subject of the “legal framework”? What do you think about the fact that mandates are only for a limited duration of time?**
- 3. Why do you think it is important that AIC volunteers act in conformity with evangelical values and the teachings of Saint Vincent?**



<p>numerous. May we <b>work together as a team</b> with the beneficiaries of our work, with the other volunteers, with God...</p> <p>We dream... that we will never lose our <b>joy and optimism</b> which we want to be contagious to all those who surround us. May we always see the positive aspect of different situations.</p> <p>We dream... that we will always be passionate about our Vincentian endeavors and will always have a desire <b>to train ourselves so that we can serve others in a better manner</b>. May we always be proud to be members of AIC.</p> <p>We dream... that <b>as volunteers we live lives of integrity</b> and give witness to the Christian life.</p> <p>We dream... that <b>the teachings of Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac</b>, as well the Church's Social Doctrine, might always remain those strong pillars that continually reveal to us the manner in which we can be better Vincentians.</p> <p>We dream... that each day we, as volunteers, might put aside our fears and <b>develop a deeper spirituality</b>; may we be mindful of the fact that it is Christ himself whom we serve and that it is Christ himself who accompanies us in the various activities that we engage in.</p> <p>We dream... that <b>each day we might rejoice in gathering together more volunteers</b> throughout the world... may our charism become rooted in the hearts of more and more people who in turn might also serve their brothers and sisters.</p> <p>We dream of many things! Our list is endless!... <b>We dream that we have shared dreams</b> and that we continue to dream and to be passionate about our work.</p>	<p><b>Always joyful</b></p> <p><b>Willing to train ourselves</b></p> <p><b>Integrity</b></p> <p><b>Faithful to Christ and the Church</b></p> <p><b>Fearless and spiritual</b></p> <p><b>Rely on more volunteers</b></p>
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**Questions for individual and group reflection:**

- 1. What are your dreams and the dreams of your companions for your group and for AIC as a whole?**
- 2. What do you view as the more urgent forms of poverty that you and your group ought to confront?**
- 3. How might you attract more members to your group so that they share in your dreams and participate in the work that you do?**