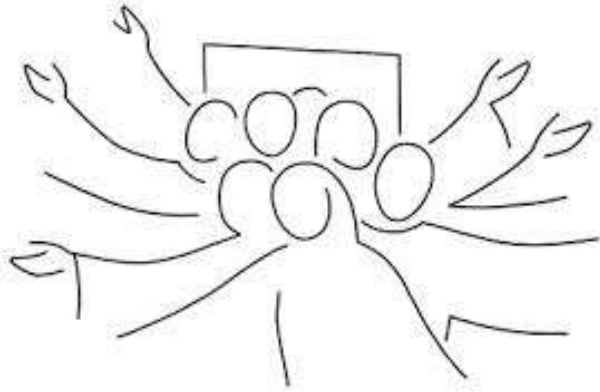




*“We have not just been called to serve the poor  
but to ensure that others serve them.”  
(Saint Vincent)*



*“The harvest is plentiful,  
but the workers are few.  
Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore,  
to send out workers  
into his harvest field.”  
(Luke 10:1-2)*

### **Context: Two challenges to address!**

Everywhere in the world, our AIC groups are constantly being called to renew themselves. We have to **recruit new volunteers** and **adapt our actions** to the new forms of poverty we detect, to the needs of the disadvantaged people we accompany through our service.

Addressing these two challenges is essential if we want to be able to follow the mission that Saint Vincent has entrusted to us.

*“Each challenge brings me closer to someone, to life, to myself and to God.”  
(Carmen Duhne, Aparecida 2012)*

To do this, it is essential to **make room for others**, to **open ourselves up to new things** and to **welcome and facilitate change**.

**Attitudes to change:** *Rather than opposing it or wanting to impose it on others, let’s choose to welcome it and be open to it. And if people don’t want change, let’s not impose it on them, let’s simply look for the means to make them want to follow us on the same path, at their own pace.*

*Jesus didn’t impose change on anyone.*



**What will happen in 10, 20 or 40 years if our association, our group doesn't change?**  
For many of you, the answer to this question will reveal the urgency of this challenge.

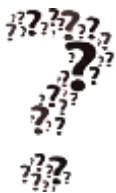
## 1. Recruiting new volunteers

**The context of life today forces us to think about the question of the recruitment and commitment of AIC volunteers.**

Indeed, when we look around us for new potential volunteers, we realise that more and more often:



- An increasing number of women work, out of choice or for financial reasons, often until retirement age
- At any age, people often already have multiple other commitments that make them less available
- New generations think and act differently
- Some people are of another religion or have strayed a little from the church
- Reconstituted families, changes in marital status during a person's lifetime, etc.



- Faced with this reality, how do we react?
- Are we ready to welcome people who don't necessarily resemble us?
- What is our attitude towards them? Are we capable of seeing their strengths?
- Are we able to adapt ourselves to what they can bring us? To certain new constraints (notably with regards to their availability)?

**Let's try to find out the motivations of potential new volunteers in order to be able to meet their expectations!** In order to do this, it is perhaps interesting to think about what motivates us personally as volunteers and also to ask ourselves about what could motivate other people to join us today.

### Examples:

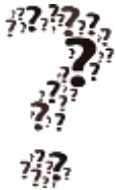
- Supporting the most disadvantaged towards a better life through a concrete action?
- Sharing wonderful spiritual moments as a group?
- Meeting other people and feeling accepted as we are, with our strengths and limitations in an atmosphere of trust and respect?
- Developing new skills and continuing to learn?

Some motivations are universal; others depend on the personality of the individual. **It is useful to identify them**, as well as the possible obstacles to commitment...

**Motivations:** Desire to serve/be useful; big challenges to address; spiritual dimension of actions (Vincentian charism); testimonies of other volunteers; listening and respect within the group; commitment and appreciative attitude of the head of the group; valuing the strengths of each person; teamwork; etc.



**Obstacles:** Limited time available; (numerous other commitments); fear of the unknown; fear of not having the necessary skills; fear of the constraints linked to commitment; concern about differences (age, marital status, religious convictions and/or commitments); etc.



- And for you, what are they?
- Remind yourselves: What motivated or blocked the commitment of people who you have invited to join you?
- Ask other people around you who may be interested as well...

### Let's reflect on our respective commitments!

In a recruitment context, it is also essential to reflect on what we can offer new volunteers, which practical tasks we can entrust them with and what commitments we expect from them.

1

#### What can we offer them?

**Examples:** Opportunity to serve/accompany the most disadvantaged; human, technical and spiritual training; team meetings and moments of conviviality; belonging to a dynamic and committed group, association and international network that it is more than 400 years old; etc.

#### What practical tasks can we entrust them with?

List the different practical tasks that could be entrusted to them.

**Examples:** Direct service to the most disadvantaged; administrative support (perhaps from home); fundraising or financial support; different kinds of training; welcoming and supporting new volunteers; technical support (e.g. IT, accounting); etc.

2

3

**As a group or association, what commitments do we expect on their part?**

**Examples:** *Certain shared values (Vincentian charism), reflected in words and actions? Minimum and/or ongoing training? Minimum availability (a few hours a week/fortnight/month)?*

*“Saint Vincent brought many people together and told them what it was possible to do and how to do it.”  
(Carmen Duhne, p.153)<sup>1</sup>*

## 2. Adapting our actions

As well as looking for new volunteers, within our groups we must also make sure we **continuously adapt our actions to the changing forms of poverty**. We must do all we can to be able to understand today’s reality and discover new faces of poverty.

To do this, while remaining faithful to the sources of our charism, we need to evaluate our actions, our ways of acting and **not be afraid to evolve and accept new ideas**.

*“Sometimes we need to unlearn ways of being and acting so we can learn new ways of accompanying the most disadvantaged. Some traditions are perhaps obsolete and no longer correspond to what the most disadvantaged need...”  
(Carmen Duhne, p.155)*

By welcoming new volunteers into our groups, we will benefit from a fresh perspective. We should seize this opportunity to question ourselves and evolve so we can continue providing ever better service to our most disadvantaged brothers and sisters for many years to come.

*Welcoming change **today**,  
so that our groups continue to fulfil their mission with the most disadvantaged **tomorrow**.*

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<sup>1</sup> Duhne, Carmen, *Con los ojos de Jesus*, Mexico, 2017.

## Texts for reflection

*“Vincent sought to focus all of his effort on the direct service of poor people. However, he knew that to do so, he would need to gather, motivate, and negotiate with diverse groups of people.*

*Vincent constantly devised ingenious ways to pool the talents of willing workers.”*

*(Thomas McKenna, Praying with Vincent de Paul, p.92)<sup>2</sup>*

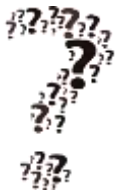
## OSER

*Being in AIC groups is about listening to others to get ideas and learning from one another. It's about getting training so as not to be solely reliant our own ways of doing things.*

*Open your heart to others with confidence, intelligence and imagination: DARE*

- *Dare to team up, utilize our differences and cherish each other*
- *Dare to share my faith during moments of spiritual exchange*
- *Dare to abandon my certainties, let myself be shaken up and rejuvenated by others*
- *Dare to face the person who bothers me and trust him/her*
- *Dare to let myself be guided, get off the beaten track, take a path I have not chosen*
- *Dare to make choices, to not want to do everything or be able to do everything, leave room for the unexpected*
- *Dare to take responsibilities and accept risks in an atmosphere of trust*

*Extract from the magazine of the Equipes Saint Vincent (AIC-France), 4th trimester 2015*



### AIC's suggestions for reflection in groups:

- ➔ **What can and must I do personally to encourage rejuvenation within my group? What concrete initiatives can we undertake as a group in this regard?**
- ➔ **What must we do within our AIC group to adapt ourselves to contemporary forms of poverty? (Use the words in the word cloud on the cover page to help you)**

<sup>2</sup> McKenna, Thomas, CM, *Praying with St Vincent de Paul*, Word Among Us Press, USA, 1994.

## Prayer

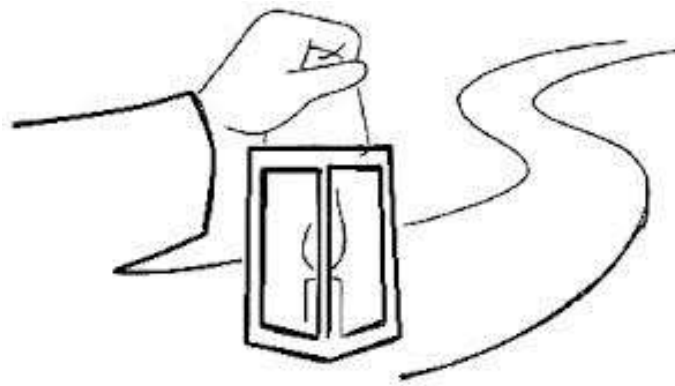
### ***“You who makes all new things”***

*Lord, you who makes all things new  
When the wind of the Holy Spirit blows,  
Come and perform your wonders again today.  
Give us the grace of listening freely,  
Without prejudice, hasty interpretations or fear.  
Let us discern in the words of others  
What could be an invitation to invent,  
To dare, to create.*

*Give us the grace of free, open intelligence,  
Adventurousness and the ability to put all things  
In a broader context; without categorizing,  
Without preconceived ideas,  
Without a personal desire to assert oneself,  
Without a desire for power.*

*Give us, as far as our responsibility is concerned,  
The audacity to have ambitious projects,  
And the patience to implement them.  
Deliver us from the instinct of ownership  
That we risk having towards the projects we create.*

*Lord, you who makes all things new  
When the wind of the Holy Spirit blows,  
Come and perform your wonders again today.*





# Recruitment Strategies

Sharing experiences from the AIC International network



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## Introduction to the topic

In the first training reflection in this series, we discussed the **challenge that presents itself in our different associations**: being able to **recruit** and **mobilise new volunteers** and **make them loyal** so that we can continue to carry out the mission that Saint Vincent has entrusted to us with the most disadvantaged people.

We highlighted the importance of **opening ourselves up to change** and finding the right way of motivating people who might be likely to join us.

But **how should we do this?** This second reflection will give you some ideas to answer this question.

We invite you to use this opportunity to reflect on practical actions you could take in your respective groups or associations to recruit new volunteers.

### Be creative!

*Let's remind ourselves of the words of Saint Vincent:  
"Love is inventive, even to infinity!"*



The different actions that we propose in the following pages are inspired by the experiences that various AIC associations shared with us in the recruitment survey that we conducted at the beginning of 2019<sup>1</sup>. We would like to thank them for their precious contributions that enabled us to draft this reflection.

This reflection will allow you to appreciate once again the creativity of the volunteers in the AIC network.



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<sup>1</sup> If you would like to receive more information about one of the initiatives that is briefly presented in this reflection, don't hesitate to contact the International Secretariat at [info@aic-international.org](mailto:info@aic-international.org).

## 1. Setting clear objectives

In order to stop an objective from remaining merely a dream, it is important to make sure it is clear. Objectives should be **SMART**:

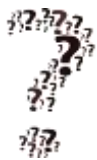
- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Limited in Time



### Examples from the AIC network...



- ✓ *In 2017, **AIC-Mexico** set itself the objective of **increasing the number of volunteers by 5% in the following year**. Thanks to the commitment of their volunteers, this objective was achieved and even surpassed: the number of volunteers increased by 7.7% during 2018. An encouraging result for the future of the association!*
- ✓ ***AIC-Bolivia** asked **each volunteer to invite at least one person she knew to join her group**. As a result, 11 new volunteers have joined the 84 volunteers in the association and 3 more are almost ready to do so.*



#### Reflect in groups:

- ➔ **What is your practical objective for recruitment?**
- ➔ **How many new volunteers would you like to recruit?**
- ➔ **How long will you give yourselves to do it?**

## 2. Knowing how to communicate well

Many associations have noticed that having **attractive and modern means of communication** is essential in order to attract new volunteers.

This means having **digital tools** such as PowerPoint presentations, a website, a Facebook page, a WhatsApp group, etc., in addition to **traditional means of communication** like brochures and flyers.



There are certain **key elements to take into account** when communicating with these new tools:

1

**Message:**

- Choose short clear messages: go straight to the point
- Use language that is modern, simple and adapted to the target audience
- Talk about what motivates us and the meaning of our actions to get through to people
- Privilege authenticity by sharing short testimonies (from volunteers and/or people that we support through our services)

2

**Adapt the means of communication** to the message that needs to be conveyed and to the audience. Don't hesitate to use audio-visual elements!



3

**Promote interaction:**

- Look to engage interest and/or stimulate reflection
- Show our concern for the common good
- Allow for an opportunity to react and respond

**Examples from the AIC network...**

✓ **AIC-Italy** presented a project aimed at promoting the recruitment of new volunteers to an Italian foundation. This foundation gave the association a subsidy that allowed about 70% of the costs of the project to be covered.

The project included the following elements:

- The organisation of **seminars, meetings and workshops** in different regions of the country to make the values and activities of AIC volunteers known;
- The updating of the **website**;
- The creation of **WhatsApp groups**, used to send a message every morning with wishes for a good day and a prayer and sometimes an invitation to participate in an activity.
- The creation and distribution of a new **brochure presenting the association**;
- **Collaboration with a journalist** to disseminate news about several local actions being carried out by AIC volunteers;
- The publication of important **articles** in national newspapers.



**Encouraging results:** a hundred new volunteers have joined the association thanks to this project and more than **1000 people** have **participated** in the proposed activities and shown an **interest** in the association. Many have started to offer **precious occasional support**, not being able to commit fully due to time constraints.

This experience highlights the **importance of being open to different volunteer profiles and new forms of AIC volunteering** (see Reflection 1).

The majority of associations emphasised the importance of using **good means of communication** for recruitment. Some observed that these tools are more **appealing** if they focus on our grassroots actions and contain **audio-visual** elements.



**Reflect in groups:**

- **What tools do you already use to make your group or association known? Are they visual, attractive and up-to-date?**
- **Is it necessary to update certain tools or create new ones? Who could do this?**
- **Challenge: each person tries to present her association and what she does in 1 minute in a way that inspires enthusiasm.**

### **3. Personalising contact**

Personalising contact – which is one of the strengths of AIC volunteers – often gives very good results.

Talking about AIC to those around us and/or sending them a personalised invitation, by phone or email, to attend an information meeting, remains an excellent way of recruiting new volunteers.

#### ***Examples from the AIC network...***

All associations stated the importance of personal contact in recruiting new volunteers. Many shared practical initiatives in this regard:

- ✓ ***AIC-Brazil:*** *the volunteers organise friendly meetings to present AIC and then invite participants to come and discover the work that is being done.*
- ✓ ***AIC-Chili:*** *the volunteers give testimonies of their actions and services for the benefit of the most disadvantaged as a personal way of encouraging the people invited to join them.*
- ✓ ***AIC-Costa Rica:*** *the students that have benefitted from an AIC scholarship are invited to become AIC volunteers – as are their teachers.*

- ✓ **AIC-Cameroon:** women who are likely to be interested in being AIC volunteers are invited to help the volunteers in their grassroots activities to discover AIC and its actions.
- ✓ **AIC-Colombia and AIC-Spain:** meetings and sometimes lunches are organised to present the association and its projects to people invited via parishes, friends or word of mouth.
- ✓ **AIC-Central African Republic, AIC-France and AIC-UK** regularly make announcements at the end of Masses to invite the parishioners to join their groups.
- ✓ **AIC-Indonesia and AIC-Nicaragua:** the volunteers use their participation in activities organised in their parish or community to make their Vincentian activities known and invite the people they meet in these places to become AIC volunteers in one of their actions.
- ✓ **AIC-Nigeria:** the presentation of the association is done by raising awareness about the difficulties faced by people living in poverty and the need to support them.
- ✓ **AIC-Philippines:** a volunteer has been designated at national level to be in charge of recruiting new members, with the help of her team.

#### 4. Participating in recruitment campaigns

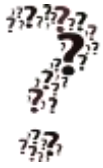
Sometimes it can be interesting to participate in recruitment campaigns organised by other entities on a larger scale, whether this is at local, regional or national level.

##### **Experience in the AIC network:**

- ✓ **AIC-France** took advantage of recruitment campaigns at national level. The volunteers mobilised themselves across the country to participate in charity and recruitment forums organised by local authorities. The volunteers had stands where they presented their actions and encouraged others to join them.



**And you? How could you recruit new volunteers?**



**AIC's suggestions for group reflection:**

- What concrete action could you carry out to recruit new volunteers? Could you take inspiration from the experiences you have seen here?
- Draw up an action plan for your initiative. Include the following elements:
  - The different steps that will be necessary
  - A calendar for implementing them
  - The resources needed for each stage (people, funds, material, time, networking, etc.)

*“The grace of perseverance is the most important of all; it crowns all other graces.” (Saint Vincent)*

**Prayer: Send us the crazy ones!**

Oh Lord, send us the crazy ones  
those who are fully committed,  
those who forget about themselves,  
those who love not just through words,  
those who really give themselves  
until the work is finished.

We need the crazy ones,  
the passionate ones,  
people able to leap into uncertainty,  
the unknown realms of poverty,  
those who accept that some get lost  
in the anonymous masses  
with no desire to come back,  
and that others use the superiority  
they acquire purely for their own ends.

This leap does not always mean  
abandoning one's background or lifestyle:  
it is a deeper rupture with the ego  
that up to now dominated.

We need the crazy ones today,  
advocates of the simple life,  
effective liberators of the poor,  
lovers of peace,  
free from compromises,  
committed to never betraying,  
dismissive of their own lives,  
able to accept any task,  
to go anywhere,  
to be both free and obedient,  
spontaneous and persistent,  
soft and strong.





## Welcoming, supporting and making space for new volunteers in our groups



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## Introduction to the topic

This is now the third reflection on the topic of recruitment: After highlighting the importance of **opening ourselves up to change** (reflection 1) and reflecting on **practical actions** that we could implement in our respective groups or associations **to recruit new volunteers** (reflection 2), this final reflection is about welcoming and supporting new volunteers.



We have learned from experience that sometimes we are so busy with our activities that we forget to look after newly recruited volunteers.

However, it is essential that we do everything we can so that any new member that joins one of our groups of volunteers feels **welcomed and well supported** during her first few months.

*Let's not forget: "Meeting someone new is always a grace!"*

## 1. Welcoming and making space

When a new volunteer joins our group, it is essential to **make time for her**:

- To make her feel at home, to present the members of the group to her and to ensure she **quickly feels trusted and warmly welcomed** by the whole team;
- To **explain** to her who we are, what we do and how we do it (our mission, activities, organisation, values, etc.), being careful to do so progressively so she is not overwhelmed;
- To **listen** to her and to allow her to ask questions.



Welcoming a new volunteering and making space for her means **accepting her as she is, with her talents and experiences**, which we must learn to get to know and **value**. We are invited to discover what she can teach us.

*Let us learn to see new volunteers as Christ did:  
"Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him."  
(Mark, 10:21)*

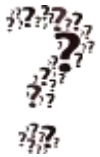
As members of **AIC-Italy** have shared with us, welcoming a new volunteer in our group gives us the opportunity to remind ourselves how important it is to **value each skill** and be **ready to change**, while remaining united through our mission and the teachings of St Vincent.



Making space for a new volunteer also implies making **some adaptations**:

- Reorganising tasks, perhaps changing roles;
- Entrusting certain tasks or responsibilities to other people in whom we have identified interesting potential for the future of the group.

*“When we add a place at the table, we have to make ours a little smaller.”*



**Reflection in groups:**

- ➔ **How do we welcome new volunteers?**
- ➔ **What challenges do we face?**
- ➔ **What else could we do? What could we do differently?**

## 2. Supporting

After this essential initial welcome, it is equally vital to continue supporting the new volunteer for a while.

We are invited to progressively help her **build** the **pathway** that is right for her and meets both her needs and those of the group, going **step by step** and respecting her rhythm.

We should ask her for regular updates on how she is feeling and, in the climate of trust and respect that we have strived to establish, we can invite her to **share** the joys and difficulties she has encountered in her Vincentian work.

### *Example from the AIC network: The Discovery Report*

For several years now, the National Board of **AIC-France** has strongly encouraged all groups, whenever they welcome a new volunteer, to ask for her “Discovery Report” after her first month.

This means that each new volunteer is asked to share during a group meeting:



- What **surprised** her when she arrived in the group
- What she **appreciated**
- What she **didn't understand**
- Her **suggestions**



### An invitation to listen and be humble...

In order for the Discovery Report to be truly enriching, it is necessary to take the time to listen carefully to the new volunteer to make use of her comments:

- If all the comments are positive, so much the better! We are invited to continue as we have been doing, while always looking to improve.
- If some comments are negative, we are invited to question ourselves, to understand what is not working and fix the issues.

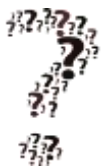
It is a moment in which we all need to prove we can be humble, as criticism is not always easy to hear. That's why we always need to bear in mind the **objective** of the Discovery Report:

***Improving the life of the group, its organisation and communication  
to better serve the people we welcome.***

This will mean we are ready to listen serenely to the new recruits who are revitalising the group.

*“A new perspective helps us to question ourselves,  
to identify potential problems that we no longer see out of habit.”  
France Morane, President of AIC-France*

*“Thank the Lord because a volunteer is a gift, a treasure.”*



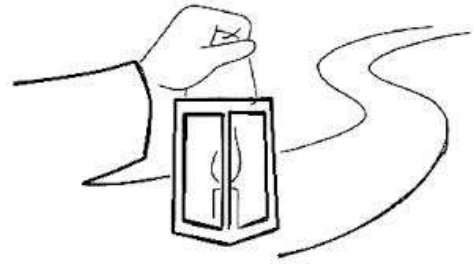
#### Reflection in groups:

- ➔ How do we support new volunteers?
- ➔ What else could we do? What could we do differently?
- ➔ What concrete commitment could we make in this area as we finish studying this topic?

## Prayer

### *If I meet another*

*“Lord, if I meet another,  
Anyone that you put on my path,  
Help me to be fully present and listen to them.  
Keep reminding me that I am neither above nor below them,  
But by their side, like a sister, as I speak with them.”*



*“Lord, if I must be quiet, may my silence be welcoming and respectful,  
A silence that allows the other to listen to themselves and hope,  
And not a silence of indifference or fatigue.”*

*“Lord if I must speak,  
May my words be words of truth that open pathways in life.  
Make me a messenger of Your word,  
The word that brings light and sense to all life.”*

*“Lord, if I hear joy, let me be part of it.  
If I encounter sadness, may a smile soften it.  
And may my Christian joy shine through,  
In order to make those that I meet  
Happier, or less sad.”*

*“Lord, after these encounters,  
Let me find the time and the will to entrust to you in prayer  
All those you have put on my path.  
Fill my heart with a feeling of love for them,  
Because even if I meet thousands of people,  
If I do not have love, I am nothing.”*