



Beneficiaries and project participants applying construction skills acquired at training in Hueyapán, Mexico

What if the 13 Houses Campaign was not only about “13 houses”?

If you are a member of the Vincentian Family you have probably heard of the “[13 Houses Campaign](#)”. Run by the Famvin Homeless Alliance (FHA), the Campaign stems from the Jubilee celebrations of the 400th year of the birth of Vincentian Charism, which had underlined the “welcome the stranger” theme.

Inspired by the 13 actual houses Vincent acquired in the Saint Lazare area of Paris 400 years ago, this initiative is part of the FHA’s effort to encourage collaborative, action-based projects which we hope will make a real difference to the lives of 10,000 homeless people across the world in the next 3-5 years. The Campaign was officially launched at the FHA International Conference in Rome in November 2018. Six months into the Campaign, here is how the VF is reacting to that call to action.

Projects are collaborative

Through the Campaign, Vincentians are called to team-up to make a difference in the lives of people living in precarious housing conditions. Projects where only one branch is present will not be excluded from the Campaign, although partnerships often enrich the endeavor. Projects which have joined the 13 Houses Campaign, show that different combinations are possible.

In **Colombia**, the [DC*](#) work with [AIC](#), [AMM](#), [VMY](#), and NAVYL. All branches present in **Mexico** are involved. In **Madagascar**, the [CM](#), the DC, and Akamasoa are partnering to restore dignity in the lives of garbage dump dwellers. In **India**, DC, CM and the [SSVP](#) are working together.

In many cases, partnerships go beyond the VF, underlining the systemic perspective needed to find long-term solutions. In **Ukraine**, it is Depaul Ukraine partnering with the CM, AIC, and the Minor Sisters of the Missionaries of Mercy. In **Guatemala**, the Vincentian collaboration has drawn the support of other entities such as the United Nations Development Program, and the National Conference of Religious Congregations.

Projects aim to transform the lives of “the homeless”

The “13 houses” Campaign uses a broad definition of homelessness to encompass all forms of precarious housing conditions: rough sleepers, slum dwellers, women in shelters, street children, refugees, internally displaced people, victims of violence or human traffickers... The projects which have joined the Campaign show the variety of target homeless populations and the diversity of solutions being proposed.

In [Bangalore](#), India, the “13 houses” project will re-house some slum dwelling families and others made homeless by the floods in Kerala. In Antananarivo, Madagascar slum dwellers will also be moving into houses, but their housing program will progressively reintegrate them into a community, with access to healthcare and education opportunities.

On the other hand, in Mexico, Guatemala, and Northern India victims of natural catastrophes will participate in building their new houses in safe areas, and will get vocational training. Finally, in **Peru**, Venezuelan refugees participate in a community project, where they will not only be housed, but also be integrated through training and job opportunities.



Project participants making the ecological construction blocks in Guatemala

13 houses projects: not just houses, not necessarily 13

Vincentians joining the 13 Houses Campaign are showing great creativity in finding solutions adapted to local needs. On the one hand, some projects are using the number “13” to enhance their action. In Mexico, for example, each of the nine Vincentian Family branches sponsored a house for earthquake victims.

** AIC (International Association of Charities), AMM (Miraculous Medal Association), CM (Congregation of the Mission), DC (Daughters of Charity), NAVYL (Children friends of Vincent and Louise), SSVV (Society of Saint Vincent of Paul), VMY (Vincentian Marian Youth).*

The "13 Houses" Campaign aims to improve and transform the lives of 10,000 homeless, refugee, internally displaced persons, and slum dwellers in the next 3 to 5 years, starting in 2018.

We would like to see "13 Houses" projects in each of the 156 countries where the Vincentian Family works! Join us and make sure your country is part of this global campaign to end homelessness!

Through the 13 Houses Campaign they took on the construction of four more houses in order to reach even more affected families.

Other projects think outside the box. In [Little Rock, USA](#), the project involves renovating one house to become a home for an individual or a family who have experienced or is at risk of homelessness. This is to be a starting point for further investing into housing as a necessary response to homelessness. In Peru, Vincentians plan to build 20 houses and provide vocational training for unemployed Venezuelan refugees and locals who are living in the streets. In Guatemala, they will build 35 houses for volcanic eruption victims.

Projects will not necessarily involve just houses or apartments. In Ukraine, the plan consists of a three-story shelter to accompany homeless people in their journey out of the streets. In **Kenya**, the plan is to provide a safe space to welcome, accompany and promote street children.

This shows the name of the Campaign does not prescribe one single solution, but wants “13 houses” to stand as a metaphor for all those actions that aim to provide safety, community, warmth, hope and a future, similar to Vincent’s project for the abandoned babies 400 years ago.

We know there are many more stories and projects like this one out there. In your Vincentian ministry are you involved in one? Do you wish to put one together with others in the Vincentian Family to provide long-term solutions? Let us know! The Famvin Homeless Alliance will sum your “13 Houses” experience to the worldwide effort. To show how the Vincentian Family can make a difference.