

NEWSLETTER



Fondazione Marista
per la Solidarietà
Internazionale Onlus

FMSI

Per il Bene dei Bambini

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Land grabbing

A scramble for land

by Sofia Basile

Former FMSI volunteer and researcher



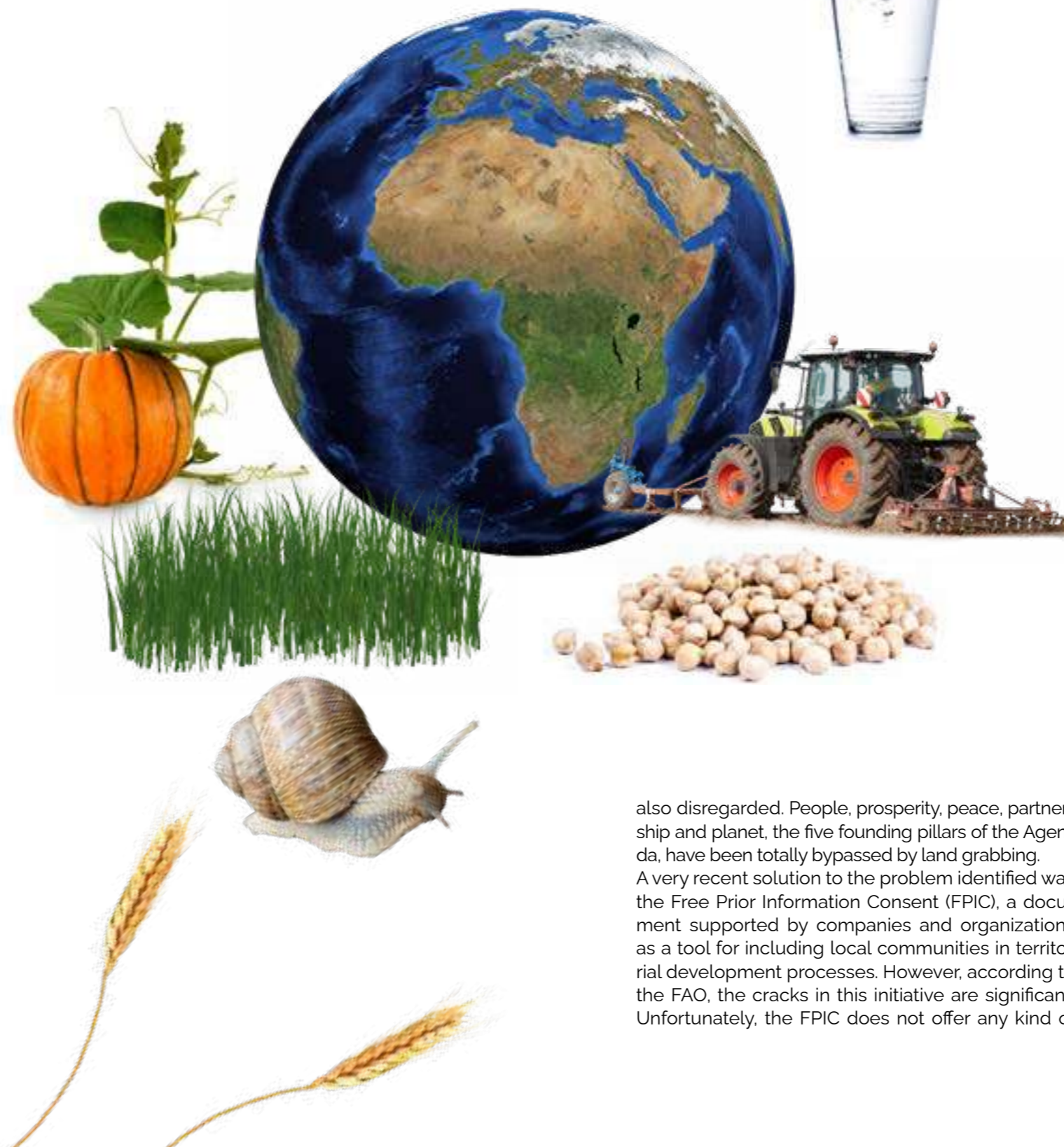
Land grabbing is now the term attributed by the critical press to transactional land acquisitions, land investments undertaken by Western countries in order to reduce the risk of food insecurity and to meet the demand for alternative energy and other needs that only developing countries seem

to be able to meet with their natural resources. However, this grand solution promoted by many global powers turns out to have a downside that is increasingly difficult to hide; the idea of exploiting "empty lands" and underutilized lands in an efficient manner is revealed to be merely a land rush in which the continuation of classic North-South dynamics is reconfirmed.

To date among the top investor countries, we find without much surprise the United States, Great Britain, the Netherlands; along with China and India, seeking resources in the most vulnerable countries of Africa of Latin America and Asia. Eastern Europe has recently been considered attractive prey in this business and many stakeholders have turned their eyes to Romania, which turns out to be some of the richest land in Europe as well as the site of extensive land speculation.

In recent decades Oxfam America reports that more than 81 thousand hectares of land, a space the size of the state of Portugal, have been occupied, and that since the 2008 financial crisis the phenomenon has grown by 1000%. The international organization says that this practice in addition to damaging the place itself has irreparable repercussions on local populations. The loss of arable fields on which indigenous farmers are dependent results in extreme poverty, food insecurity, loss of identity and tradition. Coming up short are a long list of civil and political rights that appear difficult to claim because of the few clear decrees regulating area purchases or leases. Transparency of contracts appears to be to date still one of the biggest problems in the matter forcing indigenous communities to abandon their spaces without any kind of notice leaving them deprived of any dignity and possibilities. Transparency is also absent with respect to the resources actually exploited; in fact, land grabbing should only concern arable land, which instead is only one part of a whole

involving forests, water and mineral resources. Agenda 2030 and the SDGs have not been sufficient to develop an ethical consciousness in the economic and productive sector, the goals of equality, peace, and poverty alleviation are not only ignored but



also disregarded. People, prosperity, peace, partnership and planet, the five founding pillars of the Agenda, have been totally bypassed by land grabbing. A very recent solution to the problem identified was the Free Prior Information Consent (FPIC), a document supported by companies and organizations as a tool for including local communities in territorial development processes. However, according to the FAO, the cracks in this initiative are significant. Unfortunately, the FPIC does not offer any kind of

protection or guarantee of concrete rights to families, who are informed, but are left with no tools to appeal to in order to oppose land grabbing. The Consensus then rediscovers itself as yet another political card to be exploited to stem protests and movements without being in any way useful to societies by becoming a channel for the continuation of injustice and discrimination.

An important role with respect to this issue has been played by the World Bank, which instead of being complicit and supportive of the peoples has unthinkingly promoted investment in arable land. Peasant Organizations from Asia, Africa, the Americas and Europe have held the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) responsible for independently providing large-scale land grabbing by increasing global inequality. The neoliberalism so much promoted by the two institutions par excellence and the pushes for land privatization were, according to peasant organizations, the causes of the rising cost of living for all communities. Since the 1980s, the two international bodies, together with the WTO (Common Market Organization), have forced Southern states to decrease investment in food production and reduce support for peasants and small farmers. This is because over time food reserves managed by states have reached prices that are no longer sustainable, forcing different governments to reduce and privatize them under structural adjustment schemes.

The Indonesian Farmers' Union testifies that *"The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in the name of the Structural Adjustment Program, have pushed for the financialization and privatization of natural resources in Indonesia. When people oppose these land grabs-which take place in the name of REDD+ or other similar programs-farmers are attacked, jailed and criminalized. The case of Ahmad Azhari, who was kept in prison for almost 9 months for defending farmers' rights, is recent. All these institutions are here to help multinational corporations expand their business, rather than to lift people out of poverty"* (Zainal Arifin Fuad, national peasant leader of Serikat Petani Indonesia -SPI).

Land grabbing we see then that it responds to a logic that is now increasingly diverging from that of sustainability despite the fact that sustainability is the only viable way to continue to inhabit a world on a human scale. Biodiversity and the finiteness of space should remain in front of our awareness and should help us learn to share the only planet we have.



The War in Ukraine FMSI's Commitment to the Affected Populations

The Ukraine-Russia crisis, which has been shocking the world for months, did not break out suddenly, but stems from an open conflict between two countries that started a long time ago. Since the beginning of the clashes, the conflict has led to a worsening of the living conditions of the populations involved, with a dramatic impact both in socio-economic and security terms, disrupting the lives of entire families with children forced to live in an ongoing state of conflict that has resulted in reduced access to services and the impossibility of access to safe, quality education.

The global pandemic has further exacerbated the situation, adding further pressure on the already very tried population.

To date, more than 7.5 million children in Ukraine are in grave danger, displaced within their own country or beyond its borders.

"More than 14.5 million people are on the run, mothers and children. Hospitals, schools, orphanages, homes are under attack. At least 257 children have been killed and 394 injured as of 22 May, with the real number probably growing every day. More than 20.2 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance: 5.3 million are children under the age of 18, 3 million of them inside the war-torn country. More than 2 million women and children are in urgent need of life-saving nutritional assistance, 2.2 million are in need of protection, including children and internally displaced persons, and are at risk of family separation, gender-based

violence and explosive devices. More than 3.3 million children in need of education, 3.3 million in need of economic support' (Source: UNICEF).

In such a dramatic and extremely delicate scenario, FMSI decided to give concrete help.

In collaboration with the Italian Red Cross and some parishes in the city of Rome, and thanks to the support of FMSI supporters and the precious contribution of the Military Ordinariate, we were able to launch a campaign to collect basic necessities. At the beginning of April it was possible to deliver to the Parish of St. Hilary of Poitiers over five quintals of basic necessities which will be destined for the Ukrainian refugees in Rome. We collected 120 kg of food, 230 kg of clothes, 50 kg of medicines, 15 boxes containing intimate hygiene goods, 5 kg of toys and early childhood accessories.

Our efforts have not stopped there. **FMSI continues to collect basic necessities to continue supporting the Ukrainian population through essential humanitarian interventions for families and children affected by the conflict.** We collect and distribute hygiene kits, food and money for all those in need.

For those who wish to continue supporting our cause, please contact Francesco at FMSI at +39 3385360289 and/or email fmastrorosa@fmsi.it.

Thank you to all those who have helped us and to those who will continue to do so.

Income-generating activities for schools in Africa

"I want to work in the fashion industry" Mary Mulusa is 16 years old and since 2 months she has been attending the sewing and tailoring course at the St. Paul school near Kabwe, Zambia. Like so many girls in Zambia, Mary did not finish secondary school. Transition rates from primary to secondary school in the country continue to remain low, due to lack of places to accommodate all students, high costs of education, and long distances to travel to many schools. Add to these already insurmountable obstacles, girls often face the challenges of child marriage and teenage pregnancies.

The sewing and tailoring course is in a class inside the St. Paul secondary school near Kabwe, Zambia. It is a free of charge course for all boys and girls who have dropped out of school and are looking for a second chance. The classroom was set up with 12 electric sewing machines and two trainers who alternate during the tailoring courses that are held in the afternoon. The initiative is supported by funds from the New Horizons Project, funded by Misesan Cara, within the 'Income Generating Activities' (IGA). The purpose of IGAs is to engage schools in activities that can generate income to be reinvested in scholarships for children in need or other social projects. In the framework of New Horizons, a total of 16 IGAs are underway in 21 schools in Zambia and 4 other countries in the region (Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola and Malawi) ranging from school gardens, chicken farming or other small entrepreneurial activities. Income generation activities *"can be profitable ventures that schools could tap into to raise extra*

funds for financing educational programmes" ("An Evaluation of Income Generating Projects in Public Secondary Schools", Hezron Nyagaka Nyamwega, International Journal of African and Asian Studies). Furthermore, some of the initiatives are important learning opportunities for students: when children are directly involved the IGA can contribute significantly to increasing their ability to make decisions and achieve personal goals centered on the well-being of the community.

"I want to become a tailor, it's my future," says Brian Mashilipa, 16. *"In the classroom with me there are other boys; numerically we are less than the girls but we are not less skilled!"* The school is in fact open to everyone, boys and girls as long as they are older than 14.

"We initiated this project driven by the great need to give an alternative to these children who have often dropped out of school." tells Reuben Banda, director of St. Paul's School. Among other activities, the students of the sewing and tailoring course make school uniforms that they then sell to St. Paul's school. *"The school saves something on school uniforms, and the children make their activity sustainable with positive effects of an economic and social nature. Not only does it seem to work but above all the boys are learning a job: this is the best way to give them a concrete chance to break the cycle of poverty."*

Our 5x1000

Results we have achieved over the years

The **5x1000** is a tax return that the Italian government distributes among organizations carrying out socially relevant activities. Eligible organizations are involved in activities of social interest, voluntary work or scientific research. To donate your 5x1000 to an association, simply indicate its tax code on your income tax return form. FMSI has been a recipient of the 5x1000 since 2008 and, just to provide an example, the figures for the latest years are shown below:

- Year 2016, n. 109 Supporters: € 6,236.26 amount collected;
- Year 2017, no. 115 Supporters: € 6,415.96 amount collected;
- Year 2018, no. 115 Supporters: € 6,754.80 amount collected;
- Year 2019, no. 95 Supporters: € 7,012.23 amount collected;
- Year 2020, no. 59 Supporters: € 4,983.64 amount collected;

Funds donated to FMSI were applied to several of our projects, for instance:

- *'One Dollar for Breakfast - Un desayuno para un niño = un dolar'* in Caracas, Venezuela. The recipients were children from economically vulnerable families suffering from severe malnutrition and its associated physical and health consequences. The project, in partnership with the Marist Brothers of Venezuela, aimed to provide breakfast daily to children studying at six popular free schools run by the Marist Brothers, for the duration of the school year.
- *"School maintenance - Renovation of the sanitation and other facilities at Bilene Marist schools"* in Bilene, Mozambique. The project enabled the renovation of the school's toilets, which were in a poor state of repair, and the repainting of the school buildings. The Marist school in Bilene is located in a very poor rural area, where basic services are lacking. It is the only secondary school in the area, along with six primary schools, for a high number of children and young people. The school's 1023 students, both boys and girls, come from economically vulnerable families, who live from fishing and subsistence farming. The school supports itself with state aid and through very low fees that the students pay according to their income. Thanks

to the project, the school can offer an improved learning environment and adequate health facilities for the high number of students.

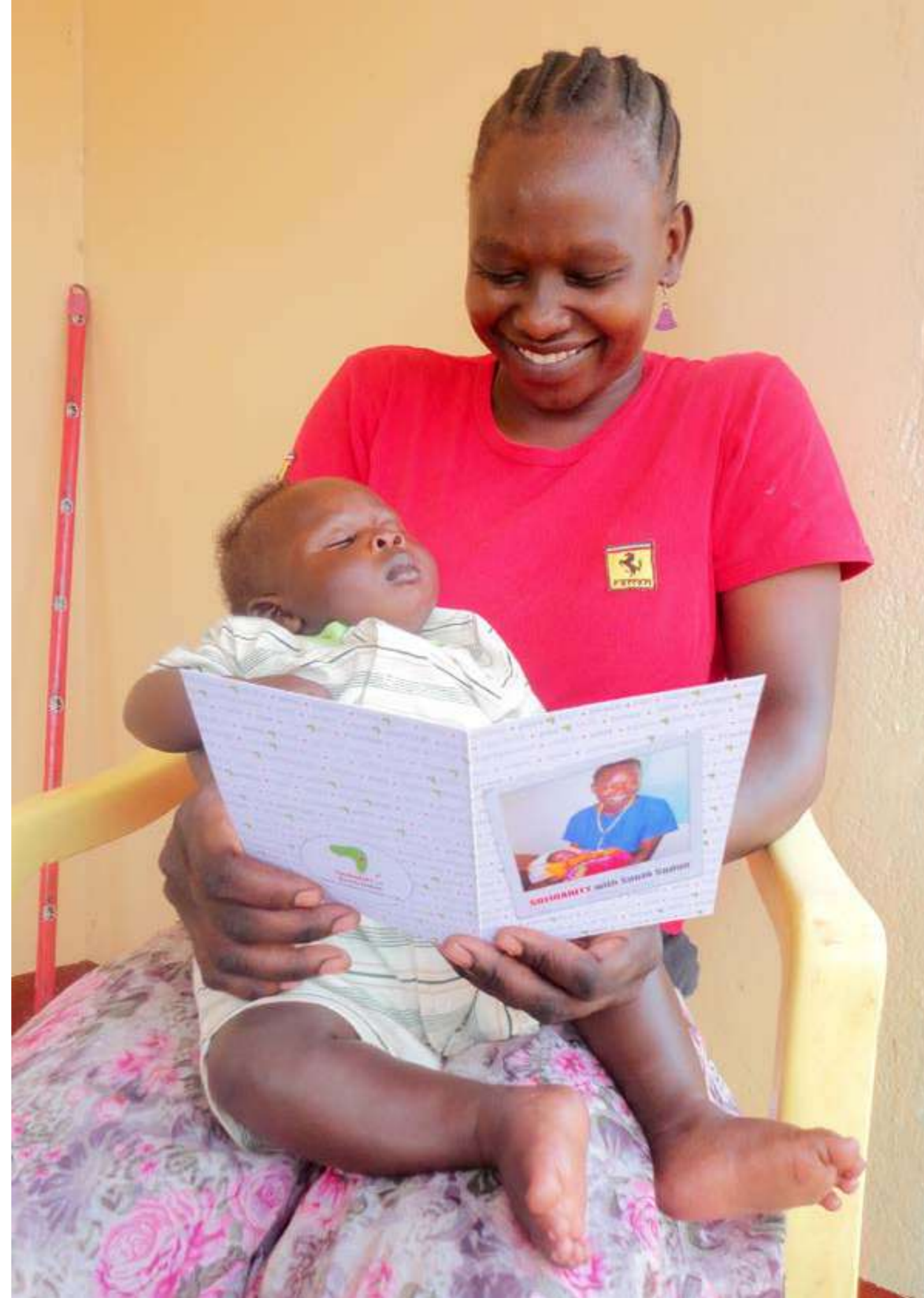
- *"Training new generation in South Sudan"* implemented in Yambio in South Sudan. The project, which is part of the broader 'Solidarity with South Sudan' programme, supported the training programme for local primary school teachers with young people from all parts of the country, including minorities and students from refugee camps on the borders with the country. The students from the course are then employed as Primary school teachers in schools in their home villages or in other areas where there is a shortage of teaching staff.

Since 2021, FMSI staff has been realigned to devote part of its energies to a real awareness-raising campaign to raise funds through the 5x1000. The Foundation relies on the contacts of the individuals working at FMSI which makes it possible to establish a direct relationship between potential donors and the Foundation itself. An appreciable improvement was achieved as FMSI provided its activities and aims to each potential donor. FMSI donors could observe that FMSI work was based on the optimization of resources for the total benefit of the most needy through its projects, as well as maximum transparency. This has been the most important key element in terms of credibility of FMSI - The Foundation, keeping its supporters constantly informed about the Projects realized thanks to the 5x1000 contribution through summary sheets and dedicated communications.

FMSI is particularly pleased to share the encouraging result obtained for the year 2021:

In 2021, the number of FMSI supporters reached a total of **328**, for a total amount **€ 18,750.82**

Sincere thanks to all of you.





New Horizons for a transformative educational model in Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe

The Project in brief:

New Horizons'aim is to increase equal access to quality education for all children in order to promote equity, social justice and inclusion in Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Access to education is more difficult for children who are part of socially excluded communities or groups, such as low-income families, orphans, refugees, disabled. At institutional level, all countries' education systems need to be strengthened to scale up inclusive literacy programs and address the challenges of equity, quality, and social justice.

Access to quality education shall be ensured for all students by effectively meeting their diverse needs in a way that is responsive, accepting, respectful and supportive. Marists are at the forefront in implementing child protection policies and a child-rights based approach that could contribute to kickstart a reform of the educational systems in order to embrace a holistic approach where the wellbeing of the children is the priority.

Aim of the Project:

New Horizons is under implementation in 21 local schools and communities in Malawi, Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique. 18,334 students, 795 teachers and 469 school staff are involved, with the view to extend outcomes to some other non-Marist Schools to achieve positive, lifelong change, pursuing improvement of school in terms of its capacity to become a place for the safeguarding and empowerment of children.

Keeping school fees affordable and supporting drop-out students (especially girls) with Income Generating Activities (IGA) is one of the ways the Marists want to tackle the poverty issue.

Through the capacity building and sharing best practice at different levels, initiatives will be promoted in each school for the access to education for disadvantaged children and youngsters in the local community. Specific intervention on the Child Rights and inclusive education aim to increase the capacity to respond to vulnerable students' needs: learners need to be prepared to engage in society, to access meaningful citizenship and to acknowledge the values of human rights, freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination. This will further promote the access to education for vulnerable children and will prevent school dropouts. For what concerns disabilities and gender, teachers will be trained and made aware of children rights and the rights of people with disabilities, increasing their ability to meet their students' needs.



Project main figures:



- **12.500** children and girls coming from poor and marginalized families who are enrolled in Marist schools in the 6 countries involved.



- **770** school leaders and teachers from Marist schools who adopted new educational standards and inclusive teaching methods.
- **16** income generating projects implemented in 4 countries.
- **3 UPR** for the defense of child rights sent to the UN.
- **22** stakeholder engaged for extending school policies, good practices advocacy schemes and tools produced to other non-Marist schools.



“Equity of access to quality education for girls and disadvantaged children in Malawi”

The Project in brief:

The objective of the Project is to improve the quality of education in 4 Marist and 3 non-Marist schools in Malawi by ensuring the improvement of equal access to education, particularly for girls.

FMSI is currently implementing the Project “Equity of access to quality education for girls and disadvantaged children in Malawi”, thanks to the support of one of its main Donors, Misesan Cara. Malawi has a high rate of illiteracy as many people are unable to read and write and if about 50% of girls in Malawi complete primary school, only a third of these make it to secondary school and only one in five graduates.

Girls’ education in Malawi is a huge challenge: Malawi has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world — more than 40% of its girls marry before 18. And once they wed, many of these girls drop out of school. In addition, a crisis like the pandemic is leading even more girls to give up on school. Girls Empowerment clubs, if properly supported by programs that enhance communication skills and self-confidence and psycho-social training and skills development, are able not only aimed to get girls into school, but also to ensure that girls learn and feel safe while in school; have the opportunity to complete all levels of education acquiring the knowledge and skills to compete in the labour market; learn the socio-emotional and life skills necessary to navigate and adapt to a changing world; make decisions about their own lives; and contribute to their communities and the world.

Aim of the Project:

The 2 outcomes of this proposal are improving quality education in 4 Marist Schools and in 3 Non-Marist Schools in Malawi and ensuring the improvement of equal access to education in particular for girls. To achieve these outcomes, a set of activities will be implemented involving 7 schools, 2,974 students, 160 teachers, and various key stakeholders at local and national level. Among the main activities: 7 new girls empowerment clubs in each school to be created, stakeholders’ engagement, training of peer counsellors, empowerment of children and young people for a healthy, provision of material and support programs that enhance communication skills and self-confidence, psycho-social training and skills development.

From a rights-based approach, the project will also seek to lobby the government of Malawi to place education as a priority of all without any discrimination in both policy and practice. In particular, the project will aim at lobbying the government of Malawi through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The project is consistent with three key priorities: education, health and human rights and, by reaching the envisaged outcomes. It will contribute to the enhancement of access to quality education in Malawi Secondary Marist and Non-Marist schools. To this end, activities will be implemented to produce measurable outputs to overcome the challenges and creating an impact in the schools and in the areas where the project will take place, helping the direct and indirect beneficiaries to be aware of their potential

and letting girls being empowered also about their rights. At the beginning of May, 2022, two FMSI Staff members carried out a field visit to monitor the implementation of the Project activities. In addition to the Executive Project Meetings, the team visited two of the seven schools involved in the Project, Msalura Community Day Secondary School and MAFCO Community Day Secondary School and had the chance to interview students, teachers, parents and headmasters. Interviews highlighted students’ in-depth knowledge of the Project, the issues that children and families face and all the ways in which the Project is contributing (and will contribute) to improving their education and lives. The FMSI team had also the possibility to interview the main Project stakeholders, Salima District Commissioner’s Office, Director of Education, Youth and Sports & Salima District Education Manager. Interviews highlighted stakeholders’ appreciation on the Project and their willingness to actively contribute to its implementation during all of the three years.

To date, this Project is reaching its scopes and all the team members involved, both in FMSI Office in Rome and in the field, is committed to assure it far beyond the Project duration.

Il Progetto in numeri:



- **4.105** children who will have improved their ability to take health and safety measures.



- **4.105** students will have improved their communication skills.



- **4.105** students will benefit from ICT solutions.

- **300** teachers and students trained.

- **15** stakeholders involved in the project.

- **8** girls empowerment clubs created.

- **1.560** girls benefiting from the resilience, psycho-social training and skills development programme.

Download our Bilancio Sociale 2021



www.fmsi.ngo