

# NEWSLETTER



Fondazione Marista  
per la Solidarietà  
Internazionale Onlus

## FMSI

Per il Bene dei Bambini

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# A Revolution for Solidarity

## "Humanity must be flooded with humanity"

**Andrea Rossi**

FMSI Director



In the current world scenario, the war in Ukraine occupies the front pages of Western newspapers. Other Countries, perhaps more distant from our local newspapers, endure ongoing conflicts about which little information is known. These conflicts in Afghanistan, Libya, Myanmar, Palestine,

Mozambique, Syria, are today, if that were possible, even more distant from Western thought and news: countries and peoples forgotten or ignored by public opinion and the media of the Western world.

The way we narrate the world is also changing: the narrative of death is being normalised, the technical analysis of weapons, precision drones, the micro-atomic. More and more space are given to tactical analysts who, like football coaches, illustrate patterns of engagement to encircle and wear down the enemy as if it were a video game.

There are those who, in all this, think - for reasons that escape me - that this can somehow be considered a 'just war', feeding the dangerous idea that a war can, after all, also be just. Although Italy repudiates war as a means of resolving disputes, a principle enshrined in our as in many other Constitutions, a great and incomprehensible **silence** has descended in the newspapers, in election campaigns, on social networks. And what is dangerous is that people talk rhetorically about **solidarity** and **humanity**, but do so in a one-sided manner, justifying some and demonising others, based on partisan interests - almost always economic - that one would like to elevate to potential justification for any war action.

Dangerous pockets of extreme **cultural poverty** are being created in our regressing civilisation, evidently related to the usual and well-known inability of human beings to act together for the common good or for any end that transcends immediate material interest. There is a feeling that dangerous steps backwards are being taken towards directions and scenarios that may lead to the abyss or the inhuman, as unfortunately has happened repeatedly in history. Reiterating our irreducible **no to war** is an excellent start to recovering lost ground and

attempting to restore some values that we have lost along the way, namely, **humanity**. We realize that it is only through mutual help that our existences suddenly acquire value. As Renzo Piano once said, *"There are ideas that are so beautiful that you cannot do without them. Beauty is a complicated concept, of enormous depth. The most sublime, and contagious, beauty is that of solidarity."*

**We can no longer afford to believe that the world we would like is there, somewhere, or that someone will one day give it to us without us lifting a finger.** The theory of small gestures, of the drop of the sea that can put out fires, is no longer enough: on the contrary, we must recognise the failure of certain logics of thought such as 'I did mine', which are not counterbalancing a situation of collective de-responsibility: we must go beyond solidarity expressed through the occasional, impromptu donation, green ribbons, the peace flag and the signature on [change.org](https://change.org).

Believing in 'just a click and the world will change' has already put us in a position to fall into dangerous traps: the so-called sharing economy deluded us that somehow and without any civil mobilisation, the world was changing for the better. It prefigured a path of organising production that was 'participatory, free, establishing an ethically oriented community, dedicated more to collective well-being than to profit'<sup>1</sup>. Nothing could be further from reality, especially for workers.

No real change comes through a road that does not involve great sacrifice: to overturn structural dynamics requires a radical change, a 'special operation' of solidarity. **Humanity must be flooded with humanity.**

When I speak of a revolution for solidarity, the movements of 1968 immediately come to mind. Indeed, '68, which involved almost all the States of the world and introduced irreversible changes in society, exploded at a time when petty-bourgeois individualism and hedonistic and utilitarian consumerism triumphed. And so, in addition to protest movements, new forms of civil commitment, solidarity and sharing with the most disadvantaged strata of the population were born, triggering a cultural revolution that also involved the Catholic world. It was precisely in this climate that Caritas, the pastoral body of the Italian Episcopal Conferen-

ce (CEI), saw the light in 1971, with its hundreds of diocesan and parish associations, based on militant and highly committed lay volunteerism, in close and direct contact with the most fragile.

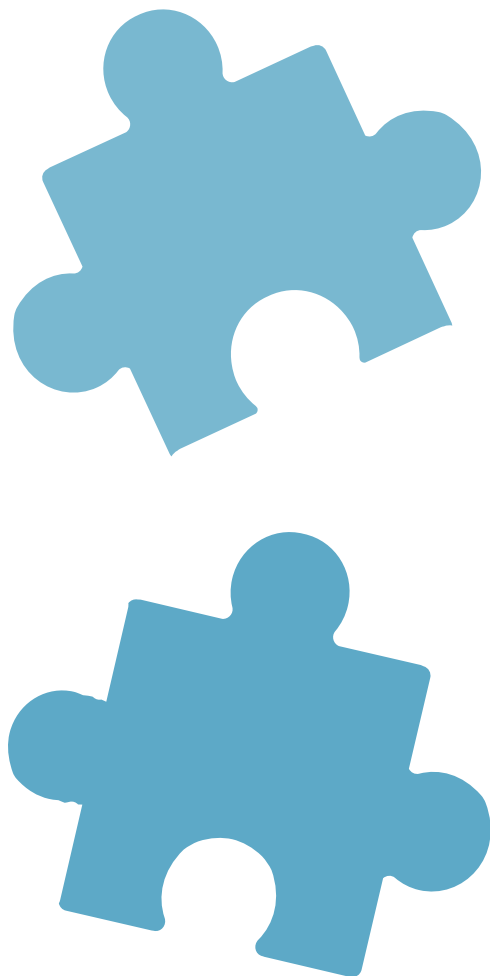
As it was in '68, perhaps even in this historical moment we can see an opportunity to be seized: precisely this depletion of the basic values of humanity and community ties can set the conditions for the emergence of a new revolutionary movement, this time based solely on **pacifism** and **altruism**.

To make this change on a global level, it is not necessary to start from scratch, as the concept of solidarity has already been enshrined for decades in most of the world's Constitutions. In the Italian Constitution, the word solidarity is mentioned as early as Article 2, and placed in relation to 'inviolable rights' (*'the Republic recognises and guarantees the inviolable rights of man, both as an individual and in the social formations where his personality is developed, and requires the fulfilment of the mandatory duties of economic, political and social solidarity'*); and, again, Article 119 speaks of *'promoting economic development, cohesion and social solidarity'*. It would therefore, in many cases, simply be a matter of exercising rights already enshrined in the constitution.

It is obvious that a revolution like this needs a **trigger**. Certain events today resonate widely in public opinion and can become part of the collective consciousness. Around them, empathetic feelings and new forms of narration, of construction of meaning, take shape. And above all, the **spirit of solidarity** on a national or international level is tested around them. In the aftermath of the Russian invasion, the almost transversal reaction of help and welcome for Ukrainian refugees gathered support even from deeply divergent political parties within a few days. Perhaps for a few moments, but around these sentiments, Europe was truly united for the first time: almost six million Ukrainian refugees received, the largest refugee crisis since the Second World War, to which the European Union responded by activating, at the beginning of March, Directive 55/2001 on temporary protection and setting in motion a perfect organisational machine, driven by an irrepressible force of solidarity. **It has already happened** and we must talk about it by extolling it as our special operation: these are the values we must

collect and recount by praising participation, enthusiasm, collective mobilisation (and without the useless rhetoric of heroism or patriotism).

We have a great opportunity: to transform the memory of these tragedies into a celebration of solidarity and altruism and to make possible a unified and anthropologically broader vision of solidarity. Gino Strada said ***'the possibility of a world in which utopia is only something that is not yet there'***. We already have it. We just need to roll up our sleeves and do it again.







## For 15 Years, Together

## For 15 Years, Together, for the Benefit of Children

**Francesco Mastrorosa**

*FMSI Project Administration Officer*

In 2013 I had just finished my more than 40 years of professional experience in the service of the State when I had the opportunity to meet the Marist Brothers and their Foundation (FMSI). I immediately fell in love with them and realised that I could still make a contribution of my own for the good of children or, more generally, for the good of those most in need.

That is how I started working for FMSI, drawing on the knowledge and skills I had acquired in my previous working life. I became concerned about how to benefit Marist communities in need of support quickly and effectively.

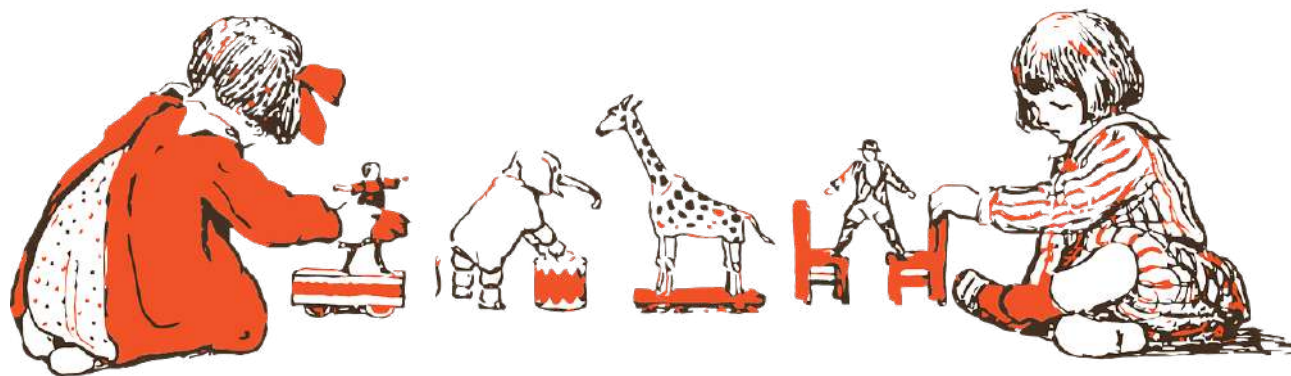
During these years I have met Brothers and known unimaginable realities. I have touched the living conditions of people who are 'content or would be content' with restrictive living standards far removed from those we, the western world, ordinarily experience. FMSI, for reasons of priority only, turns its attention to children, to whom childhood is often denied. In line with the idea of the Founder (Marcellin Champagnat) and within the framework of solidarity initiatives, FMSI supports

the neediest communities in terms of social promotion and raising the level of culture as the motor and foundation of authentic development.

Within the framework of FMSI's responsibilities, I have also been fortunate to use my competencies to promote the design of infrastructures suitable for increasing educational capacities in our communities. This is how I have had the burden and the honour of seeing schools built in Madagascar, Haiti, Mozambique, Ghana, East Timor, Bangladesh, Lebanon, as well as the renovation or extension of existing educational infrastructures in many other Countries. These infrastructures are complemented by the commendable work of the Brothers present in each of the communities concerned, who with their charisma and sacrifice optimise the resources made available to them.

All of this success has been a great gratification for me, as I am able to perceive in a very obvious way, how someone, thanks to that infrastructure, will have a concrete chance of a better future.

**Our wish is to be able to do more and more, also with your help!**





## FMSI

### 15 years on the side of the Least

On Oct. 24, 2007, at the behest of the Congregation of Marist Brothers, the Marist Foundation for International Solidarity was established.

But FMSI is much more than a date inscribed in official documents: it is the Brothers, the men and women who 15 years ago laid the foundation stone. Thanks to the efforts of the many who have worked on it over the years, FMSI continues to carry out activities aimed at achieving the primary purpose set forth at the time of its establishment: to make the world a better place for children and young people.

In a social context that is the bearer of growing inequalities, we have been working for fifteen years on behalf of the rights of children and adolescents with the aim of guaranteeing them better living conditions, and we work to ensure that all children have equal opportunities to access education and all universally recognized rights. We work at the international level to give voice to the silence of the most fragile, seeking, daily, to ensure that all children, regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion, know and exercise their rights.

**In these first 15 years we have accomplished a lot:** the support of Private and Institutional Donors has enabled us to carry out more than 400 Projects benefiting more than 6.5 million beneficiaries in 65 countries around the world.

We have implemented Development Programs and Projects in 5 Continents, which have been joined, according to contingent needs, by Emergency and First Aid Projects following natural disasters or social unrest. Thanks to the Advocacy and Child Rights Unit, in which several Brothers have succeeded one

another over the years and who - profitably - have directed it, it has been possible to present 56 Reports on the Rights of the Child within the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the United Nations.

We are proud to have walked and - to still walk together - a path made of common goals and shared aims with Programs such as Three2Six - which for years has been guaranteeing the right to study to migrant and refugee children in South Africa - the Marcellin Program - which takes in children at risk and children in conflict with the law in the Philippines or, again - the Molouvibazar Education Program - which supports and sustains children and youth on tea plantations in Bangladesh - and the Brothers Project - created in favor of refugee children in Lebanon.

**In these first 15 years we have we have accomplished a lot but we want to do more.**

Our dream is the same as it was 15 years ago, it is our Vision and our goal: a world where childhood is respected and guaranteed, free from violence and fear, where children are full citizens and are recognized as active members of their communities and society. For this reason, for 15 years and for all the years to come, we have been and will be working to develop the potential of children, girls and young people, especially those most vulnerable and marginalized, through education, advocacy and solidarity projects.

**To the next 15 years. And to those to come.**





## A Huge Tree

Travelling toward the others,  
every day, is the sense of adventure

**Angela Petenzi**

*FMSI Project Administration Officer*

Over the years that I have worked in the project sector of the Marist Foundation for International Solidarity, I have had the opportunity to make many trips to the various Continents. Over time what were just dots on the map and hard-to-pronounce names have become places and people known and labours and joys shared. I am grateful for this sequence of encounters that have changed my life, I appreciate this ongoing exercise of seeing the world through the eyes of others and for a special vulnerability whereby if something happens in the world or there is a war between two formerly friendly peoples, you suffer and participate because on both sides there are people you know, you contact them to find out how they are doing and you care about their lives.

The Marist Foundation has implemented many projects thanks to the support of so many donor agencies, the Marist Institute, private individuals. We offer special thanks to our local Marist communities who have opened the doors of their schools to new urgencies, and 3were open to new training and aid which lead to a new way of considering children and pupils, as St. Marcellin taught, while at the same time overcoming local values and customs.

Alongside this success, the Marist Foundation takes stock in its labours, efforts- successful and sometimes mistaken, and even a perceived sense of 'smallness' in the face of what seems to be a well-oiled 'evil' machine...etc.

However, be assured, that seeing a child or a domestic worker who was never able to go to school, or write their own name, or proudly perform mathematical operations in front of everyone, or the smile of an elderly person who received a hot meal within the walls of a bombed house is like feeling 'a huge tree covering rubble.' All this, and more, give meaning to life and to the work of the Marist Foundation.

My visits on trips have always been too short to get to know the local reality and cultures in depth, and I thank the Marist communities for facilitating this work, acting as mediators like Mary and helping me sharpen the gaze that recognizes **hope. Yes, hope can be sensed by a white shirt washed and ironed in a slum of garbage, or a pencil jealously preserved in a broken-down backpack, or a cook singing among crumbling houses, or simply the young girl waking up at 3:00 a.m. to go to a school mile from home braving the danger of the road and the greater danger of being a girl.**

With our projects, the Marist Foundation hopes to be the midwife who ultrasounds these hopes, helps people give birth to hopes and grow them for the lives of all.









## Interview with Pascual Emilio Ramos Gordillo

Director and Legal Representative  
of the Chantiik Taj Tajinkutik AC Association



**Tell us about yourself, Pascual.**

**I am a lucky man.**

I realised this when I sat down to reflect and answer these questions. I am a single father and have a 9-year-old son named Itzael, which in Maya means Gift of Heaven; I share custody and (the challenges) of

parenting with his mother. I am a self-taught musician, currently holding workshops on the arts with a focus on rights at the Rosario Castellanos cultural centre in Comitan de Dominguez, the city where I come from.

I am the eldest of three siblings, my mother was only 16 when she had me. My family was like that of all my friends, my mother at home, my father working, the struggles for money that wasn't enough, and my father's drug addiction normalised in the family and the whole neighbourhood. One of the best memories of my childhood was going with my friends to 'Casa de los Maristas', where there was a court to play basketball, where Brother Mauricio gave us snacks and where I felt free to go because my parents considered it a safe space.

The dream of being a musician was what - with the inexperience and irresponsibility of 14 years old - made me run away from home because my parents couldn't pay for my music lessons. After walking for several days along the road to board passing vehicles, unaware of the risk I was exposing myself to, I arrived in the city of Merida, in the state of Yucatan. Here I began working the streets informally, trying to support myself with music, playing in markets and streets, cleaning windshields and/or

helping fellow musicians juggling traffic lights on the main roads. My family's anguished search paid off 14 months later. During that time I lost all my values and good habits and tried everything (drugs, alcohol, petty theft). Returning home finally made me realise the risk I had unknowingly exposed myself to, but also the **huge inequalities that exist in our society**. The vulnerability I was exposed to, such as being subjected to discrimination, hunger, insults, fear, omission and lack of interest from the authorities, led me to understand and verify the constant violation of the rights of children and adolescents. I feel fortunate. Despite the environment and violence that our whole country faces, today, I am the Director of Chantiik, a Civil Association that has offered me a safe space for 15 years, has supported integration and reintegration in schools, educating with values, learning a trade, knowing and defending the rights of children and adolescents. This association also deals with the problems of the family, supporting it, and works to ensure that healthy intra- and intergenerational relationships are established and recreated in society. **Yes, I am a lucky man, because I take care of my son, I am a musician and I work for children and their rights.**

**Where were you born?**

My name is Pascual Emilio Ramos Gordillo, I come from a family of farmers and entrepreneurs, I am currently 36 years old and live in the city of San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas.

**What do you do in your spare time?**

I decided to dedicate my spare time to looking after my son, making music and holding workshops on the arts with a focus on the rights of children and adolescents in my area.



**What is your experience with FMSI?**

On a personal level, my parents' house is five blocks from the Guadalupe de Comitán de Domínguez mission. In that Casa Marista there was a basketball court, where we children could spend our afternoons, exercising our right to have fun in a safe space. At the work level, working with children and young people introduced us to this Foundation, about which I can say: it is one of the best Foundations that contribute to the healthy development of minors, which, thanks to the professionalism of its operators, has allowed us to grow by helping others with love and courage. My experience is positive.

**Equity, non-discrimination, solidarity & justice. What do they mean for you?**

Equity: every human being has the same intrinsic value as every other human being "we all have the same value".

Justice: we all have human rights and we have the responsibility to know them, spread them, defend them and demand them when they are violated, for us this is justice.

Solidarity: we start from the assumption that each person is our fellow human being and that we must empathically collaborate in the mutual pursuit of personal, family and community development, which contributes to building a healthy social fabric.

Non-discrimination: we accept, respect and promote acceptance and respect for diversity in all areas of human development: sexual, religious, functional. All these values and principles underpin human dignity and without them, both on a personal and community level, the dignity of every human being is undermined.

**Do you feel close to the values and Mission of FMSI?**

Yes, through my personal and life development, I have developed values that have led me to be the human being I am and above all to have a mission in my life, which is to want the best for the children and adolescents of my State, so that they have a better, more inclusive world, where their rights are recognised for healthy living and a dignified life.

**How important are these values in the education of children?**

We believe that they are fundamental and foundational in the development of a critical consciousness, in the assumption of responsibility as a subject of rights, in the promotion of a creative conscience, in order to face challenges and difficulties to promote the "*lekil kuxlejal*" which in Tzeltal means "Dignified Life" for all, always respecting the particularities of the individual. These values also contribute to building a healthy,

inclusive and empathetic society. This contributes to the realisation of a good life and healthy coexistence. Values, finally, determine the personality of individuals by becoming an expression of the moral, cultural, affective and social tone expected by the family, the school, the institutions and the society in which we live.

**How would you describe FMSI?**

Humanitarian and child-supporting foundation.





## Interview with Patrick Siwinda

Project Assistant of the Project *"Equity of access to quality education for girls and disadvantaged children in Malawi"*



### Tell us about yourself, Patrick.

My name is Patrick Siwinda, Project Assistant Manager for the Project *"Equity of Access to Quality Education for Girls and disadvantaged Children in Malawi"* which was introduced by the Marist Brothers' Administration, but facilitated by FMSI and is

being funded by Misesan Cara.

I am a Governance and Human Rights expert and I hold Post Graduate Diploma in Fundamentals of Social Accountability Monitoring obtained from Rhodes University of Republic of South Africa (RSA) and Diploma in Philosophy and Humanistic Studies obtained from Inter-Congregational Institute (ICI) formerly known as Inter-Congregational Seminary (ICS) in Malawi.

As Project Assistant Manager, my job is to guarantee the positive success of the activities and respective results which are considered to be achieved only if the target of each one is consistent with the project proposal, specifically as follows:

- Ensure understanding and successful implementation of the project,
- Carry out monitoring and evaluation in order to track, analyse, add value and report on relevant information throughout the project life span,
- Provide support to young people and children to adhere to Covid-19 preventive measures,
- Provide material and support programs that enhance communication skills and self-

confidence such as motivation speakers, public speaking, drama, writers clubs, group discussion to improve use of English in communication among students,

- Provide psycho-social capacity building initiatives and skills among young people and children,
- Provide support towards ICT solutions among learners and school staff,
- Provide support to the Girls Empowerment clubs,
- Developing relations with national, district and community-level stakeholders to enhance networking and collaboration

I was born on 19th February, 1971 at Likuni Mission Hospital in the Capital City of Malawi. During my free time I do some consultancy work on governance and human rights. I am also a small-scale commercial farmer.

### What experience links you to FMSI?

I am a competent and ambitious person who has the required skills in planning and implementing donor funded projects, monitoring and evaluating projects, facilitation and community mobilization, participatory rural appraisal (PRA), participatory learning and Action (PLA), working with local communities, NGO's and Government departments, qualitative and quantitative researching methodologies, data management and data interpretation.

It is against this background that some point in time Marist Brothers' Administration used to engage me to provide capacity building interventions for their New Horizon Project and eventually such part-time engagements facilitated under institutional



partnership led to my current full time job.

As I assist the Project Management Team with project implementation by managing and promoting activity interventions through the local project teams in each targeted school, I am obliged to provide supervisory support to Executive Management and influence informed decision processes and maintain communication and coordination with the Province. In this equation, FMSI assists in application of donor's procedures and monitoring and evaluation as per the dictates of project design under Decision Making Arrangements. Hence, my clear relationship with FMSI.

**What are the principles of equity, non-discrimination, solidarity and justice for you? Why are they important to you?**

The principles of equity, non-discrimination, solidarity and justice remain cardinal pillars of human integral development that support, influence social capital growth and contribute towards meaningful human transformation for common good.

**Do you feel close to FMSI values and Mission?**

My clear understanding and personal conviction is that FMSI and Marist institutions take very seriously their duty towards all its learners; schools have been entrusted to their care and seek to provide conducive environment where all children are safe, secure, valued, respected, and their views are accommodated. The Marist schools involved are governed by the Marist Provincial policy for child safeguarding, the formal adoption of a Child Protection Policy provides guidelines for schools and their staff to create safe environments for children. All schools involved in the current initiative have a child protection policy in place. As project management unit, we have always aligned and referred our planning processes and implementation of interventions to the intents of the international, national and local legal frameworks. It means that in my work of assisting with project implementation I must ensure that the rights of children are respected, promoted, protected and really reflect fundamental constitutional principles by adopting rights based approaches to Social Accountability. Therefore, I feel close to FMSI values and Missions.

**How important are these values within a child's education?**

The above alluded values remain of paramount importance within child's education and project targeted schools shall actively promote the welfare and development of the school learners by progressively adopting and implementing policies and legislation aimed at achieving both girls and vulnerable children education goals. We need

to facilitate introduction of measures which will guarantee accountability, transparency, personal integrity and human morality and which by virtue of their effectiveness and transparency will strengthen confidence in these public institutions.

**How would you describe FMSI?**

FMSI advocate child rights and obligations.





## Interview with Andrés Canaviri Alanoca

Coordinator of the school mediation programme of the Project *“Children's and women's rights in Bolivia: follow up on the UN Bodies recommendations”*



### Tell us about yourself, Andres.

My name is Andrés Canaviri. I was born in Cochabamba, Bolivia. I am the coordinator of a school mediation programme currently being implemented nationwide in Bolivia. In my spare time I read books to broaden and deepen my knowledge, I

play sports and I am an activist.

They are important because they enable any society to live in harmony and ensure positive development for all.

### Do you feel close to the values and Mission of FMSI?

Yes, I feel perfectly adherent to these values, which are those that drive me to support service to society - Bolivia in my case - without expecting something in return. This support allows me to see and understand the most important needs of the country and to do something to bring about change for the better.

### What is your experience with FMSI?

The process of preparing the report for the 2019 UPR of Bolivia, as well as the follow-up project currently under development.

### How important are these values in the education of a child?

A child educated in these values will become a citizen who seeks good for others.

### What do the principles of equity, non-discrimination, solidarity and justice mean to you and why are they important?

### How would you describe FMSI?

Family, hope, providence, solidarity

- **Equity:** Helping everyone to achieve equal opportunities Non-discrimination: We are all important and individual differences cannot be a reason for anyone to be marginalised
- **Solidarity:** What one possesses, but also what one is, must be put at the service of others to the best of one's abilities
- **Justice:** Give everyone what they deserve









## Interview with Zeina Abou Elias Yazbeck

### Volunteer for the Fratelli Project in Lebanon



#### Tell us about yourself, Zeina

My name is Zeina, I am Lebanese and I am a teacher in technical education specializations (teaching diploma (technique supérieure: preschool and primary education and specialized education) I am a technical referent and advisor in education in a

non-profit organization Lebanese (NGO Alpha ) and Arabic consultant for a program in Chad (*Promouvoir la qualité de l'enseignement au Chad*) with *Enfants du Monde Suisse* (international NGO). In my free time, I have been volunteering in Fratelli Project since 2016 and currently I am with the community of Marist Brothers.

#### What experience bonds you to FMSI? What is your relationship with FMSI?

The experience that binds me with FMSI: the solidarity to help the people in need all over the world. So, I met FMSI through the Fratelli Project.

#### For you, what are the principles of equity, non-discrimination, solidarity and justice? Why are they important to you?

**Equity and non-discrimination** are two fundamental principles of human rights law. **Justice and equity** are inseparable values. Solidarity emanates from the action taken by one person with another to change something. A person in solidarity can act in an equitable way. And if we want a more equitable world, we must act in solidarity with those whose lives are hard. Be an actor of change to help victims of injustice.

#### Do you feel close to FMSI's values and Mission?

I feel close to the maximum of the values of the FMSI mission to respond to needs and promote social justice. Today, global equity generally serves as a starting point for thinking about equity. According to these approaches, there can be no reasonably equitable society as long as the global society is dominated by injustice and inequality. Solidarity also requires a reference group. And the range is even wider. It ranges from solidarity within the family, friends, colleagues to solidarity with the poor of developing Countries, refugees and victims of exploitation, all people in the world who need help and support.

It is important to start by promoting equity in certain areas at the local level. In terms of solidarity, it is necessary to think of a community with a common background of experience, to guarantee the share of empathy and generosity. FMSI in its actions and projects meets my personal expectations in the areas of assistance, support, education, development, empowerment, wellbeing, etc.

#### How important are these values in raising a child?

Values are related to an individual's behavior. They can become a source of fullness and satisfaction. Educating about values is a way to ensure they become tolerant, respectful, and responsible adults. The need to educate in values to the measure of the social, economic crisis that we are going through is imposed to all actors of the society, but the challenge is great as well. The main obstacle that we are facing is how to introduce the principles and value on educators and society.

#### How would you describe FMSI?

Protection, education, development, diversity





FMSI would like to express its deep gratitude to Benedetta Di Stefano for her time and work at the Foundation over these past years and for her unwavering commitment to and enthusiasm for improving the lives of children, especially those most in need. Together, we have achieved much, even amid complex situations, but always united in purpose and vision.

To Benedetta, who leaves us to continue her journey of helping others in a different way, we offer her our heartfelt wishes for a future full of much personal and professional success.

Good luck, Benedetta!

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