

NEWSLETTER



Fondazione Marista
per la Solidarietà
Internazionale Onlus

FMSI

Per il Bene dei Bambini

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Fratelli Project Libano

A dream of fraternity in the midst of vulnerability

Juan Carlos Fuertes

Project Manager of the Fratelli Project



“Mostafa is a sport volunteer in the Real Madrid Foundation’s programme with children aged 10 and 11. He has been involved in Fratelli since the project started in Rmeileh and still attends the vocational training and English courses we organise. **Mostafa sees his**

volunteering as an opportunity to give back what he has learnt over the years. The children, for their part, see in him someone like them, who speaks their language and understands what they are experiencing. At the same time, Mostafa is a role model for them. Children and young people see in him what they will be able to do one day when they grow up: give to others what they have given to them.”

The Fratelli Project started its activity in Lebanon in 2015 in Bourj Hammoud, an area around Beirut. It was the first step of an idea that had emerged between the Institutes of the Lasallians and the Marist Brothers, responding to the call of Pope Francis to go to the peripheries. Brothers Andrés Porras, a Lasallian, and Miquel Cubeles, a Marist, gave shape to this call from the two Institutes. One year later, the activities began at our centre in Rmeileh.

We are now in the eighth year of this project which aims to insert refugees and asylum seekers into the society through school and employment; to provide psychosocial support to children, young people and adults who participate in our activities; to train our beneficiaries through sport, personal and social skills; to build bridges with families, other entities and society to help live outside Fratelli what we live inside.

We have around twenty programmes for children, young people and adults, especially women. They can be divided into three types: educational, psycho-social support and vocational training. Among the educational programmes we have a pre-school section, a basic education section for

those who have been out of the school system or have never entered it, a school support section for those who are already in school, and a section for Arabic, English and computers for young adults. In the psycho-social area we have groups for women, boys, girls, children, sports programmes, training for motherhood. And in the vocational training area there are courses in hairdressing for men and women, cooking, electricity, mechanics and sewing. Every year about 1200 people pass through Fratelli between all our programmes (some of them have several cycles). Our aim is to enable them to go to school or to find a job, as well as to provide them with tools to face life and its difficulties. **It is nice to hear from the people who participate in the Project that beyond all this, attending the groups and courses helps to regain the dignity of being a person.**

Omran is a 14 year old boy who lives very close to our centre in Rmeileh. His families, composed by 6 people, is living in a house no more than 40 square metres in size. It is located in the middle of a field where they grow - for the owner of the land - various vegetables according to the season. A few days ago I met him and he told me that he always works (he helps his father with the work in the fields). But what made me happy is that I often see him passing in front of our centre with his father who takes him to school. He was in Fratelli for several years. Now he is in the official school. But he also comes to the sports programmes, to the afternoons activities we open for football and to the summer camps. Mostafa and Omran are just a few examples, like Mahmoud, Seifedin, Yamamah, Rama, Malak, Mariam... and so many others. **When we see their lives and believe that they have the tools to build their own future, we realise that all the effort that so many have put into Fratelli Project since its inception makes sense.**





UPR in Argentina, Bangladesh, Colombia and Cameroon

In April, FMSI submitted four new reports for the Universal Periodic Review of Argentina, Bangladesh, Colombia and Cameroon with focused and concrete recommendations on children's and youth rights.

Human Rights are one of the fundamental pillars of human dignity. They are inalienable and universal. The global community recognises that the protection of children's rights must be a priority and the Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes the right of all children to develop their full potential and not to suffer from hunger, lack of adequate education, neglect and abuse.

One of the international mechanisms for the implementation of Human Rights is the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of UN Member States. As part of this process, the state under review accepts recommendations on specific rights to be guaranteed through the development of policies, laws and initiatives.

The reports of Argentina and Bangladesh were developed through the joint work of FMSI with other NGOs such as the Centre Catholique International de Genève (CCIG) and Edmund Rice.

Many of the recommendations focus on the right to quality education, access for all to schooling, especially for groups in vulnerable condition, adequate training for teachers and the availability of modern equipment as a key element in making this process sustainable. For Cameroon, it is important to ensure that school

communities are not involved in armed conflict and that children and young people can study in a safe environment that facilitates access for all children to school. For Bangladesh, it is important to take action against obstacles that prevent children from accessing school or encourage early school drop out such as physical violence at school as well as at home, child labour, and the traditional practice of early marriage. Children on tea plantations are among for groups in vulnerable condition and at risk of being part of entire generations untrained and left in poverty.

Finally, the report on Colombia presents recommendations drawn up with the direct participation of children and adolescents between the ages of 6 and 15 from the La Torre neighbourhood of Medellin and focuses on children and adolescents living in the informal neighbourhoods of Colombia's big cities and in particular on their right to play: children demand to have spaces and green areas to play and to be able to carry out cultural, artistic and recreational activities in a safe environment. This right is the basis for the development of civil society and an antidote to violence.

FMSI would like to thank all those who collaborated in the drafting of these reports and wants to continue to be at the side of children, girls and young people, but also of local decision-makers, so that these recommendations are translated into reality.



Fratelli Project Maicao

A Marist heart at the centre of La Pista

Today, more than fourteen thousand people, mostly from Venezuela and native Wayuu, live in La Pista, the largest human settlement in Latin America located in a former airport in Maicao, Colombia. Moreover, over the years, people from Lebanon, Syria and Palestine have also arrived, as witnessed by one of the largest mosques in Latin America, which is in Maicao. Unlike other settlements on private lands, La Pista was an abandoned municipal plot.

Little by little, people have invaded the streets of Maicao: they have built huts made of plastic, wood and debris under a sky covered by a tangle of power cables with a boiling sun that can exceed 40 degrees and a wind that carries dust everywhere.

There are many inhabitants of La Pista who live in extreme conditions: large families, even with more than 10 people, who have only one meal a day and live in tiny shacks, amid incessant heat and frequent heavy rains. Furthermore, there is no drinking water, no access to services and the electrical installations are illegal. There are many cases of trafficking victims, including children.

Besides La Pista, there are more than fifty settlements in and around Maicao. Families survive in extremely vulnerable conditions who have chosen La Pista to save themselves and have built their homes on it, but who, if not regularised, could face sudden eviction.

"Some days we eat, some days we don't," says Balera, sitting outside his small plastic-covered hut while his grandchildren play around him. *"There is no work here, you can't do anything. Life is hard here."* (The Maicao Colombia Shantytown Runway - The Guardian, 2023).

In 2019, the *Corazon sin Fronteras* project was born, based directly on the Maicao runway. For the past four years, Kenia Navas, originally from Venezuela, has been running the project with the same name to help children and young people in their studies and by organising several fun activities. **The *Corazón sin Fronteras* project offers a safe environment for boys and girls from 5 to 14 years old. Through the many play, recreational activities and workshops, children are allowed free expression, recognition of self and other, shared play, listening to and respecting others, and intercultural interaction.**

In 2022, the inter-congregational project *Brothers Maicao* was born, where the Marist and Lasallian Brothers, as already started in Lebanon, work together in Maicao to guarantee access to fundamental Human Rights for the migrant population, first and foremost, equal access to quality education for the boys and girls of Maicao.



Cyclone Freddy is hitting Malawi hard

In March 2023, Malawi was hard hit by Tropical Cyclone Freddy, reporting severe damage in Balaka, Blantyre, Chikwawa, Chiradzulu, Machinga, Mangochi, Mulanje, Mwanza, Neno, Nsanje, Ntcheu, Phalombe, Thyolo and Zomba.

Due to the heavy rains and strong winds caused by the cyclone that has hit the country since March 12, more than 659,278 people have been displaced, 679 people have died, 2,186 injured and more than 537 are still missing (Government of Malawi data, April 2023).

The Ministry of Education has suspended - until 31 March 2023 - classes in primary and secondary schools in all affected districts: the devastating effects of the cyclone have also been disastrous for the education system, affecting schools and colleges.

Some schools have been turned into camps for displaced communities. Many markets are still inaccessible and/or without sufficient food: the price of food is rising dramatically, almost 75 per cent more than in the month before the floods. In addition, the spread of cholera remains worrying: even before the Cyclone, the country was already hard hit by a cholera epidemic, and especially in the camps set up to accommodate families who have lost their homes, given their overcrowding, there are fears of a relapse.

The Marist Brothers of Malawi have, from the outset, mobilised to support the population and families in difficulty, and thanks to constant contact with the FMSI team, they have obtained funds to deal with this emergency. Thanks to the financial support of one of the main donors, the Marist Brothers of Malawi were able to purchase and distribute food, water and hygiene materials to the most vulnerable families, to alleviate, as much as possible, the difficulties that Malawi is experiencing at this difficult time.

Thanks to the funds received, the Marist Brothers of Malawi will be able to support 1,452 people who have been hard hit by the cyclone.





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Codice Fiscale
97484360587



Con **il tuo**

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ovunque nel MONDO

ci sia un bambino da DIFENDERE!

