



Franciscans International
A voice at the United Nations

Franciscans International



ANNUAL REPORT 2015



ABOUT FRANCISCANS INTERNATIONAL

Franciscans International (FI) is an international non-governmental organization advocating at the United Nations for the promotion, protection, and respect of human rights, social rights, and environmental justice.

OUR VISION

A global community in which the dignity of every person is respected, resources are shared equitably, the environment is sustained, and nations and peoples live in peace.

OUR MISSION

We are a Franciscan voice at the UN protecting the vulnerable, the forgotten, and the wounded earth through advocacy.

WHAT WE DO

Since its establishment in 1989, FI uses advocacy as a tool to combat and curb human rights abuses. Advocacy, from the latin ad-vocare (to appeal, to invoke), is a process that aims to influence political decisions. It is the act of pleading or arguing in favor of a group of peoples' rights, causes, ideas, or policies. FI understands advocacy as a means to amplify the voices of the marginalized.

We believe human rights standards must be at the heart of all political processes, in particular those related to development, poverty eradication, and the environment.

FI's advocacy work consists of three main objectives:

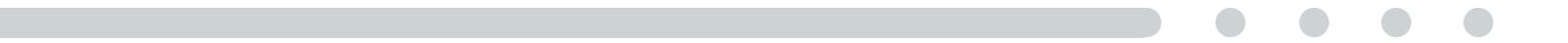
- Influencing policy-makers to bring about concrete change
- Denouncing human rights abuses and raising awareness about them
- Mobilizing partners to participate in decisions that affect them

We divide our work between Thematic Priorities and Regional Programmes.

HOW WE WORK

From its offices in Geneva and New York, FI works with grassroots movements and both national and international civil-society organizations, to advocate for structural changes addressing the root causes of injustice. We rely on the expertise and first-hand information gathered from a large network of partners working with vulnerable communities worldwide, to ensure that the voices of the most marginalized are heard at international level. FI has general consultative status at the UN, and therefore harnesses the UN system to achieve change at international, national and local levels.

FRANCISCANS INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL REPORT 2015



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

For many involved in the global human development agenda, 2015 represented a pivotal year. The adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September has set the course for the next fifteen years in terms of priorities in development work. The UN Paris Climate Talks (COP21) have provided an indication of the commitment that world leaders are prepared to make in establishing strong measures to combat climate change. 2015 was also the year during which Pope Francis mobilized worldwide attention and enthusiasm with the release of his Encyclical, *Laudato Si*, in which he offered a critique of the present global economy and its drastic consequences: exclusion of the poor and alarming environmental degradation. Through his Encyclical and ensuing declaration of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, Pope Francis has challenged and called people of good will to walk with the poor and to work globally to alleviate extreme poverty.

As President of the Franciscans International Board of Directors, I am pleased to present this 2015 Annual Report which outlines FI's activities and illustrates their impact. In the report, you will note that FI was able to make a significant contribution during such an important year. At both the United Nations and at the Vatican, FI launched its Handbook *Making Human Rights Work for People Living in Extreme Poverty*, a tool to assist those working to eradicate extreme poverty, and a way to promote a human rights based approach to development and poverty reduction. During 2015, FI also made impressive strides in mobilizing civil society around business and human rights by demanding more robust legislation to keep businesses accountable for their human rights violations. FI was also active during the Paris Climate Talks, advocating for the inclusion of a human rights perspective in climate mitigation policies, and repeatedly denouncing the current economic system that exacerbates inequality and reinforces human rights abuses. You may notice that all things begin to connect when one realizes that the first victims of climate change are those living in extreme poverty. At both international and national levels, FI and its partners continue to advocate for the most vulnerable communities, creating space for grassroots advocates to interact directly with high-level policy-makers and decision-makers.

The Franciscans International Board of Directors wishes to express its sincere thanks to the Franciscan Orders and Congregations who continue to support this common ministry of the Franciscan Family. The Board is equally grateful to the managers and staff of FI, for their professional work and for their personal commitment to the mission of FI. We also wish to thank the funding agencies, foundations, partners and all who have collaborated with FI, for their generous support of Franciscans International.

Doug Clorey, OFS

President, Franciscans International Board of Directors





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THEMATIC PRIORITIES

Franciscans International (FI) seeks to promote greater social and environmental justice by increasing the respect and protection of human rights in global policies negotiated at the UN in New York and Geneva related to sustainable development, business and human rights, and extreme poverty. The current economic model has increased inequalities in the distribution of economic and natural resources, and condemned an estimated 1.3 billion people to extreme poverty. This model, based on opening developing countries to unscrupulous and unchecked business and investment to attract foreign capital for fast profits, amounts to a race to the bottom in terms of human rights protection. Local communities, peasants, and indigenous people are inevitably among the first victims of the environmental degradation, conflict, inequality, landlessness, precarious working conditions, discrimination, violence, and impunity accompanying

this economic globalization. Democratic spaces for affected individuals and communities to influence public policies are shrinking in parallel to the concentration of power. All this reveals an urgent and long overdue need for more robust regulatory and accountability international frameworks.

In response, FI advocates that these issues be prioritized on the UN Agenda: greater accountability for human rights abuses by businesses, a rights-based approach to development and poverty reduction, and stronger international standards for the protection of marginalized and disadvantaged individuals and groups.

Thanks to its direct connections with movements at the grassroots, FI is often solicited to bring first-hand information and denounce specific issues at the UN.

BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Multinational corporations continue to perpetrate human rights and environmental abuses through their activities in the countries where they operate, and communities affected by their activities struggle to defend their rights and to obtain justice and reparation.

Franciscans International (FI) has been working to promote respect for human rights in all business operations, in particular in the extractive sector, and has been calling for greater accountability for corporate abuses, including access to justice for victims.

Since 2014, FI is one of the leading members of the Treaty Alliance, a global coalition of more than 600 civil society organizations around the world campaigning for more robust legislation on corporate accountability. After securing a landmark resolution from the Human Rights Council in June 2014 that established an Inter-Governmental Working Group (IGWG) to develop an international, legally-binding instrument on business and human rights, the Treaty Alliance launched a second campaign in early 2015. This campaign, along with a Joint Statement, emphasized that the prospective treaty should address the needs and realities of people and communities whose rights have been threatened or infringed upon by business conduct.

FI mobilized civil society organizations and social movements worldwide to participate in the Business and Human Rights Treaty process, using key gatherings like the World Social Forum in Tunis in March, to share information about the Treaty process and offer opportunities to get involved both nationally and internationally.

In July 2015, the IGWG held its first session at the UN in Geneva, bringing together governments and experts from around the world to start discussing an international, legally-binding instrument to regulate the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises. FI submitted a position paper to the IGWG, detailing its stance on the issues to be addressed to increase business accountability for human rights compliance.

FI succeeded in mobilizing a group of twelve grassroots experts around the IGWG sessions. They represented different regions and a wide range of abuses such as land and water grabbing, slavery and child labor, violence against women, environmental degradation, insecurity and corruption, health issues, and extreme poverty. The experts spoke in two FI-led debates organized during the sessions, delivered official statements, and were able to meet personally with diplomats, reiterating their message that keeping affected communities at the centre of the Treaty was key to effectiveness. FI and the Treaty Alliance are preparing for the next IGWG session in October 2016, mobilizing and empowering grassroots partners, planning to amplify their voice at the United Nations.

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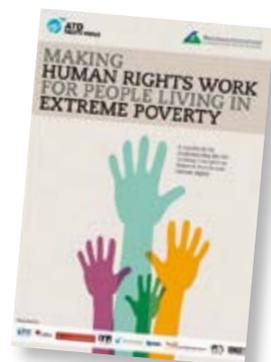
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EXTREME POVERTY

An estimated 1.3 billion people live in extreme poverty. They are trapped in a vicious cycle of inequality, landlessness, unemployment, environmental degradation, marginalization and violence, which prevent their full enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Safe working conditions, adequate housing, access to water, food and health, participation and consultation in policies that affect them – these are some of the rights in jeopardy for those living in extreme poverty.

Eradicating extreme poverty is more than just a moral duty. It is a legal obligation under existing human rights law. Franciscans International (FI) is committed to promoting a rights-based approach to policies related to extreme poverty, primarily based on empowerment, and the principles of participation, accountability, transparency, and non-discrimination.



Since 2013, FI has been working in partnership with ATD Fourth World to translate the UN Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights into an accessible tool that puts forward key elements for mobilizing and empowering people and communities to advocate for better policies. After a long process of consultations and field tests, FI and ATD Fourth World launched the “Handbook on Making Human Rights Work for People Living in Extreme Poverty” at the United Nations in Geneva, on September 21st. FI also premiered its accompanying film *Extreme Poverty: Standing Up For Rights*, that illustrates the types of situations in which the Handbook can be used. The launch gave an opportunity for some key actors in the fight against extreme poverty to express their appreciation for the Handbook and their intentions to support, promote, and use it in their work. Representatives from the EU and Ecuador, and the Ambassador of Italy, noted the timely launch on September 21st of the Handbook that coincided with the adoption of the new Sustainable Development Goals, the first of which is to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere.” They committed to using and promoting the Handbook as a tool in the fight against extreme poverty.

FI later coordinated a press-conference at the Sala Stampa in Rome in December, with ATD Fourth World and Caritas Internationalis, to present the Handbook to Catholic leaders as an instrument for combating extreme poverty, noting that the Handbook echoes Pope Francis’ concern about today’s “economy of exclusion and inequality.”

Since the launch, FI and ATD Fourth World have been introducing the Handbook around the world in workshops and trainings, reaching around 300 people. FI has developed training materials to promote the Handbook and to assist community leaders in using it in their daily work.

DEVELOPMENT JUSTICE

Today's prevailing model of economic development has over-empowered political and economic elites, and generated systematic human rights violations and environmental degradation.

With Franciscans around the world and partners at the UN, Franciscans International (FI) monitored and influenced the negotiations of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a particular focus on ensuring that the human right to water be duly included. The right to water represents a foothold for local and national groups seeking to defend their communities and territories from predatory economic development projects and policies. FI collaborated with the Mining Working Group in April to launch a campaign for the integration of the right to water in the UN Sustainable Development Agenda, involving more than 600 civil society organizations around the world, and met face to face with the United Nations Development Programme Extractives Policy Team. Ultimately, after tireless advocacy in the last moments of the negotiations, the human right to water and sanitation was included in the UN's final 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the context of this newly adopted 2030 Agenda, FI is advocating for a human rights based approach to the SDGs' implementation as a means to ensure that development and poverty eradication policies prioritize people and the environment.

FI took the opportunity to denounce the alarming phenomenon of land-grabbing at the Milan EXPO 2015 in May. Land-grabbing is a global trend that involves an increasing and alarming amount of land being sold to foreign investors. This rush for land hides tragic forms of exploitation of land, territory and local populations. Most of these land acquisitions are not legitimate because they do not take into account the economic, social and cultural rights of local people, small farmers, indigenous peoples, women and children for whom survival depends on this very land. FI was one of the only voices denouncing human rights abuses at the EXPO.

In continued efforts to expose and denounce the human rights violations connected to fracking, FI

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took a series of specific advocacy actions in 2015, including formal denouncements at the Human Rights Council, reports for UN country reviews (namely, Canada's review by the Human Rights Committee in July), and advocacy in the Sustainable Development Goals' process. FI also co-sponsored a debate at the COP21 Meeting in Paris, which provided further evidence of fracking's adverse impacts on the environment and human rights. Fracking is the process of breaking up shale underneath the Earth's surface to extract natural gas and oil. It systematically breaches international human rights law because it destroys the environment necessary for the enjoyment of human rights. Fracking poses severe threats to the environment. Not only does it release dangerous amounts of methane into the atmosphere, but it can also contaminate and deplete water resources, pollute the air, lead to deforestation, and increase the risk for earthquakes. For communities who live near fracking wells, the impacts on their rights are numerous and far-reaching. Damage to crops and livestock threatens their right to food and right to an adequate standard of living, and water and air pollution endangers their right to health and to safe drinking water. Fracking operations can also impact their rights to housing, to access information, and to public participation.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The adverse impacts of climate change are a matter of injustice and inequality. Communities who are dependent on the environment for their livelihood, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, people living on small islands and low coastal zones, and more generally people living in poverty, are the ones most affected by both climate change and the responses taken to address its impacts. The increase of droughts, floods, cyclones and typhoons threaten their right to life, to adequate food, to safe drinking water, to adequate housing, to health. Those communities whose rights are most threatened are also those most at risk of being left behind and marginalized in talks about mitigating climate change. Franciscans International (FI) and partners are therefore advocating for climate talks to highlight the protection of human rights as a key element in mitigating the impacts of global warming. They are also pushing to ensure that marginalized communities are involved in any future climate actions.

The promotion of a human rights based approach to climate change at key UN events was crucial to

FI's advocacy on climate issues in 2015. In this context, FI facilitated the presence of Kiribati President Anote Tong at the Human Rights Council in March, during which he spoke on a panel about the pressing need to adopt a human rights based approach when addressing climate change. FI also co-sponsored debates at the Human Rights Council in both March and June that brought the human rights perspective on climate to the attention of decision makers at the UN.

FI was active around the COP21 UN Conference on Climate Change, calling for strong binding human rights language to be included in the text of the agreement. FI's representatives participated in specific events at the COP21, speaking in debates during the official sessions and taking part in parallel discussions with activists and civil society, seeking to influence the language of the deal, insisting that governments must be held accountable for protecting human rights when addressing climate change and seeking to mitigate its impacts. FI also met face to face with different representatives of affected countries to promote its position.



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2015 AT A GLANCE

Americas

- Argentina
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Canada
- Chile
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Haiti
- Honduras
- Mexico
- Nicaragua
- Panama
- Peru
- United States
- Venezuela

Europe

- Italy
- Switzerland

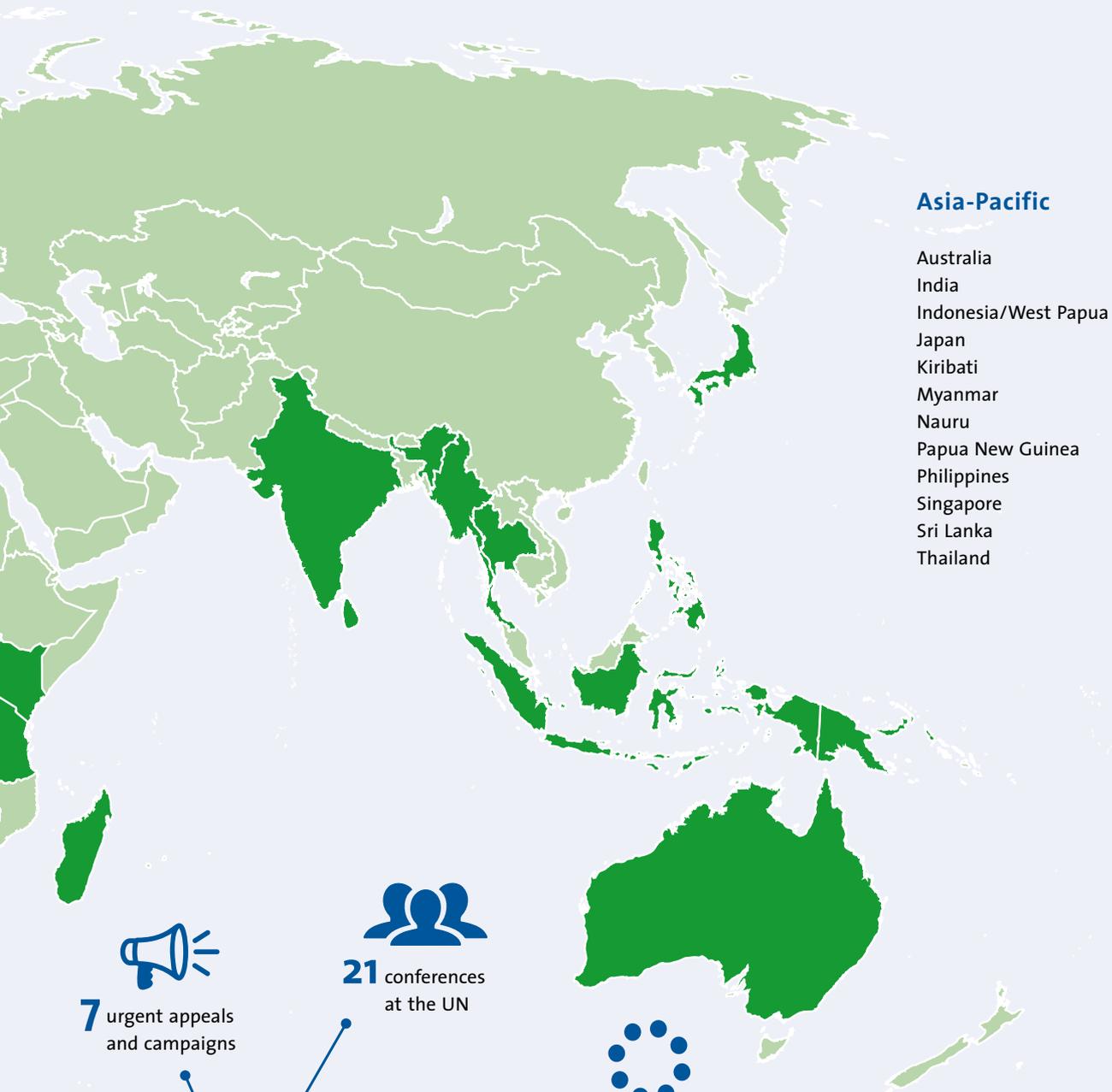
Africa

- Benin
- Chad
- Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)
- Ivory Coast
- Kenya
- Madagascar
- Rwanda
- Tanzania
- Uganda

 1 film

 3 publications

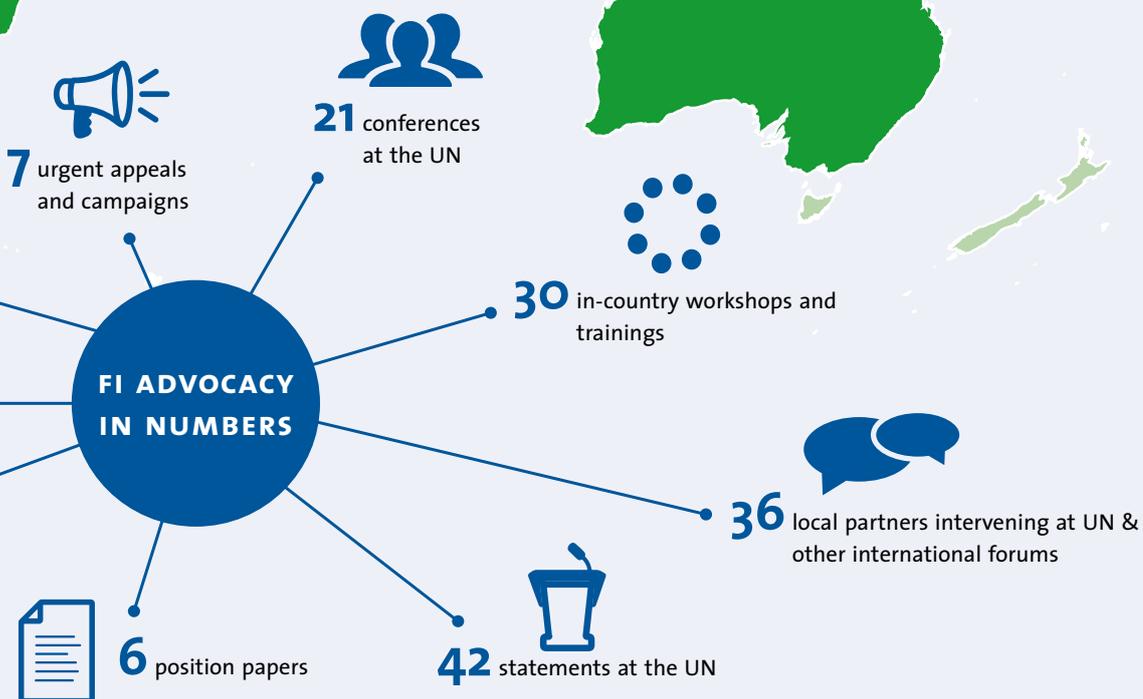
 30 reports documenting human rights violations



Asia-Pacific

- Australia
- India
- Indonesia/West Papua
- Japan
- Kiribati
- Myanmar
- Nauru
- Papua New Guinea
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Sri Lanka
- Thailand

FI ADVOCACY IN NUMBERS





AFRICA

For over ten years, Franciscans International (FI) has been advocating for the effective realization of economic, social, and cultural rights in sub-Saharan Africa, and addressing poverty and social injustice through a rights based approach. Specific focus is given to advancing the human rights of women and children since they are often the most affected by socio-economic inequalities, making them vulnerable to exploitation, violence, and other forms of abuse.

The Africa Programme covers five regions of sub-Saharan Africa (West Africa, Central Africa, Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, Madagascar and the Islands). In 2015, FI continued its advocacy work in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.



FOCUS ON: Côte d'Ivoire

The situation of children in Côte d'Ivoire remains a concern, as poverty, a lack of basic rights and various forms of exploitation continue to prevail. The country still counts 2.8 million children who have not been registered at birth, depriving them of a legal identity and therefore of access to their most basic rights, including nationality, education and health care. These unregistered children are thus rendered more vulnerable to all sorts of abuses, such as sexual and economic exploitation, forced labor, early marriage, and human trafficking. Recognizing the link between birth registration and the respect of basic human rights, FI has been focusing its advocacy work around promoting birth registration for all children in Côte d'Ivoire.

In 2015, the country was reviewed by the UN Human Rights Committee. Along with its partner civil society organizations, FI took up this opportunity to further highlight and denounce the coun-

try's low birth registration rates. FI and its partners interacted directly with decision makers at the UN in Geneva, detailing the situation and calling for the modernization of the birth registration system as well as more efficient campaigning about the issue. The Human Rights Committee's formal recommendations included specific references to issues brought up by FI and Ivorian NGOs. FI reiterated its message on birth registration to the Independent Expert on Côte d'Ivoire during the Human Rights Council.

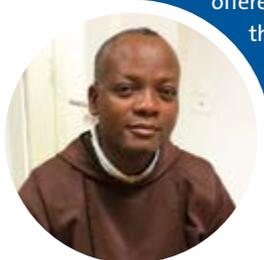
In the country itself, FI gathered state representatives, civil society actors, and human rights experts to develop an action plan on how best to follow-up on the UN's recommendations to improve birth registration. Creating space for open dialogue such as this has helped to improve the follow-up of UN recommendations, thus marking a tangible step forward in the eradication of serious human rights abuses in vulnerable and marginalized communities.



FOCUS ON: Benin

Ritualistic infanticide is a phenomenon still widely practiced in certain areas of Northern Benin. In these traditional communities, a child that is either born breach, premature, with teeth, or with a visible handicap runs the risk of being labelled a "witch" bringing bad luck to the family, and is therefore disposed of. The practice of ritual infanticide jeopardizes the rights to life, health, and development of thousands of children in several African countries. Addressing the issue remains a taboo, impeding significant improvements. FI and its local partner Franciscains-Bénin have been collaborating for several years to carry out awareness-raising projects on the ground, and to advocate at the UN.

In October 2015, the UN Human Rights Committee considered the situation of civil and political rights in Benin. FI focused its interventions on the situation of children accused of witchcraft, and on the need for a more robust system for registering births. On the basis of first-hand information provided by FI and its field partners, the Beninese authorities were urged to take legislative measures and raise awareness to eradicate the practice of ritual infanticide in Northern Benin, and bring those responsible to justice. The Beninese government has included several provisions to punish harmful practices against children in its new Child Code (enacted in December 2015), and specifically incriminates the practice of infanticide which includes ritual infanticide.



AUGUSTE AGOUNPKE OFM Cap followed the first of many trainings on human rights mechanisms offered by FI in 2007. With FI's support, he created and now heads Franciscains-Bénin, one of the organizations involved in including infanticide as a punishable act in Benin's new Child Code. "Without FI's continued training and support, I would still be working in the bush, isolated, and unaware of how to tackle the issue of ritual infanticide, missing out on a vital network of human rights defenders."



FOCUS ON: Democratic Republic of the Congo

The human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remains a cause for grave concern, particularly in the Eastern part of the country. Serious, widespread and systematic human rights violations are committed with impunity, including against civilians. Reports include allegations of extra-judicial executions, endemic sexual violence against women, on-going recruitment of children into armed groups, massive displacement of populations, and threats and reprisals against human rights defenders and independent and critical voices, including journalists.

The persistent climate of impunity, the presence of armed rebel groups, weak governance, a flawed electoral system and the lack of state authority throughout the territory, the illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources, and the lack of equality between men and women have been identified amongst the root causes exacerbating human rights violations and abuses in the country.

A human rights based approach tackling the root causes of violence, conflict and impunity should be at the centre of national, regional, and international efforts to effectively address the situation in the DRC and ensure a lasting peace. In the run-up to the 2016 elections, enhancing the rule of law and guaranteeing respect for human rights becomes even more imperative for the Congolese authorities and requires continued international attention and support to avoid past experiences being repeated.

JULES MBOKANI is the coordinator of CREDDHO, a research centre on the environment and human rights in the DRC that seeks to provide information to communities and influence authorities. He came to Geneva in the context of the 1st IGWG on Business and Human Rights. "Through our partnership with FI, we feel that we are part of something bigger. Many in the DRC are losing hope, and have no access to information. The work on a Treaty for Business and Human Rights is a big opportunity for us, we need to reflect on how to integrate and influence the Congolese Parliament, and how local communities can be better involved when businesses establish themselves on their lands."



FI organized a roundtable in the DRC in May, bringing together different stakeholders to discuss the link between human rights abuses in the context of extractive industry and the cycle of violence in the country. A further debate at the September Human Rights Council in Geneva, sponsored by FI and NGO partners, explored the root causes of the conflict in the DRC. FI's long-time partner Msgr. Fridolin Ambongo Besungu, president of the Episcopal Commission on Natural Resources of DRC, challenged the international community to consider natural resource extraction in the DRC as the underlying cause of numerous and interrelated human rights violations.

Throughout the year, FI joined a multitude of voices in reminding the international community not only of the gravity of the human rights situation in the DRC, but also that the Congolese civil society is counting on the political pressure and financial support of international actors to ensure greater protection of human rights and human rights defenders in-country.

JANUARY

Urgent appeal on extrajudicial killing of indigenous youth in West Papua

Bolivia UPR follow-up

01

Webcast of Kenya UPR in Nairobi



FOCUS ON: Uganda

Despite positive steps taken by the government, Uganda still faces a multitude of economic, social, and cultural rights violations.

Oil exploration, as is widely occurring in the Albertine region in Uganda, comes with risks that undermine the full enjoyment of rights by women. Since the majority of women do not own land, they are excluded both from the negotiations about the land that is vital to their livelihoods and from any eventual benefit that comes from selling the land to oil corporations. Women in these areas are thus often left landless and suffer accordingly.

Early and forced marriages are still prevalent throughout the country, especially in rural areas, and are often linked to female genital mutilation. Females are only considered adults and ready for marriage after they have undergone this procedure, which typically occurs when girls are between the ages of 12 and 16.

Child labor affects more than 30% of children aged between 6 and 13, especially in communities where poverty is rampant. Instead of going to school, they are involved in lucrative economic activities that include growing and harvesting, fishing, and charcoal burning.

Finally, while the number of birth registrations has improved over the past few years, in 2013 UNICEF reported that five million children under the age of five still remain unregistered in Uganda. The birth registration process remains complicated in the country, with high fees and difficult access to registration centers for those in rural areas.

Uganda went through its first review by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in June 2015. With first-hand information gathered from its partners, FI raised these concerns to the Committee. The latter subsequently raised the issues of women's lack of involvement in the management of natural resources, early and forced marriages, child labor and birth registration in its official recommendations to the State, echoing FI's concerns.

FI is now putting in place steps to focus on Uganda's response to these recommendations, so that the communities affected can move towards the full enjoyment of their rights.

FEBRUARY

Urgent appeal on the human rights of Ryukyuan indigenous peoples in Japan

UPR consultation in Honduras

02

Treaty Alliance coordination meeting

Report on conflict minerals in Eastern DRC





© WORLD BANK PHOTO

AMERICAS

The Americas Programme works with a broad range of partners to address human rights concerns in North America, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. In response to the priorities of our partners, Franciscans International's (FI) work in the Americas focuses on the overlapping issues of poverty-, development-, and business-related abuses, with a special emphasis on the rights of indigenous peoples and the rights of women. As a complementary component of the Programme, FI seeks to promote the responsibility of home countries for the operations of their corporations in Latin America.

An emerging priority issue for the Americas Programme is the regional human rights crisis of Central American migrants and refugees.



MARCH

Conference at HRC on the impact of climate change in Pacific Island states with partner from Kiribati

Statement on Bolivia UPR

03

Lobbying on children's rights in Côte d'Ivoire at HRC

FI-lead conference at World Social Forum in Tunis on Business & Human Rights



FOCUS ON: Mexico

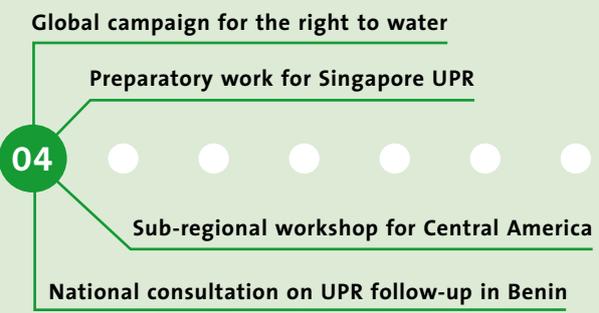
Unaccompanied minors have been arriving at shelters in Mexico and in the United States, often sent by their parents in a desperate attempt to save them from the violence taking place at home. The visibility of this crisis in mid-2014 put both governments under pressure to take rapid action. Ever since Mexico put in place its new administrative policy, “Programa Frontera Sur”, the insecurity and vulnerability of migrants has worsened. Because they are forced to find alternative routes, migrants along the Mexico-Guatemala border are even more exposed to abuse and violence from organized crime and agents of the State. Violent police operations carried out near migrant shelters have discouraged many from seeking refuge in recognized locations.

Consequently, there has been a clear increase in human rights violations – ranging from crime and extortion, to murders, forced disappearances and massacres.

In 2015, Franciscans International partnered with the Franciscan migrant shelter La 72 (named in honor of the 72 migrants massacred in San Fernando Tamaulipas in 2010), to make the situation of these migrants known at the United Nations. The majority of the people who arrive at La 72 come from Central America and many are fleeing for their lives, hoping to escape gangs and violence.

With La 72, FI denounced the negative impacts of Mexico’s Programa Frontera Sur on migrants’ human rights before the Human Rights Council in September 2015. In December, FI hosted Brother Tomás, the Franciscan friar who operates the shelter, in the USA and facilitated advocacy meetings with representatives of the Mexican government, the US government, UNICEF, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and key allies in civil society. FI also endeavored to connect Br. Tomás to other key international Franciscan networks, and is committed to working in partnership with La 72 to continue denouncing the situation of migrants on the Mexico-Guatemala border and beyond.

APRIL



FOCUS ON: Colombia

In November 2014, a group of Afro-Colombian women walked the 600 kilometres from their villages in the department of Cauca, to Bogota, the Colombian capital, to protest the devastating impacts of mining and violence in their region: sexual violence, assassination of community leaders, contamination of water, loss of livelihood (artisanal gold mining), and forced displacement. Their signs, songs, and clear demands to the government were in the name of defending life and their ancestral territories.

In solidarity with these demands, FI and the Franciscan Family of Colombia sought to help bring their voice to the United Nations, using the country's review before the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in August 2015.

In dialogue with the Franciscan family and community leaders in Cauca, FI documented the discriminatory impacts of policies that promote and allow illegal and unconstitutional mining. Based on the information presented by the community partners, FI focused on water contamination, forced displacement, the right to prior and informed consent, and the situation of human rights defenders. FI invited two Colombian representatives—a community leader and a representative of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Franciscan Family of Colombia—to address the Committee directly in August, sharing their concerns and accounts of the situation. The advocates also met with several other relevant decision- and policy-makers at the UN.



In its concluding observations, the Committee reflected the recommendations of FI and concluded that Afro-Colombian men and women face “persistent structural discrimination and invisibility ... which manifests itself in the inequality gap in terms of Afro-Colombians’ exercise of economic, social, and cultural rights in relation to the rest of the population,” and directly mentioned the threats and violence that keep Afro-Colombians from exercising their rights over territorial lands. The concerns of the communities in the north of Cauca were also cited specifically.



HAROLD SANCHEZ OFM, heads the JPIC Office in Colombia. With FI's support, he traveled to Geneva to address the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: “FI provided us with international assistance, they understand the value of our work, and even help us accompany other Franciscans in the struggle against human rights abuses.”



MAY

European lobby tour with human rights defenders from West Papua

Participation in JPIC Meeting of the Franciscan Family of Central America in Guatemala City

05

Sub-regional workshop for Central Africa in Kinshasa, DRC

Second Joint Statement of Treaty Alliance addressing the need for a legally-binding instrument on Business & Human Rights



FOCUS ON: Honduras

Local human rights defenders who speak up for economic, social, and cultural rights are routinely stigmatized, intimidated, and even killed with impunity. Indigenous communities are bearing the disproportionate burden of the push to intensify resource extraction.

In 2015, FI continued its advocacy by using Honduras' Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to draw the attention of international stakeholders and national officials to serious violations of indigenous peoples' and communities' rights in relation to the imposition of extractive development projects, including the situation of human rights defenders and the rights of people living in poverty.

FI brought forward personal testimonies from victims and human rights defenders working at the grassroots level and submitted written reports about the situation in Honduras. In April, FI invited a representative of the Franciscan Family to advocate in Geneva in person in preparation for the UPR. FI and partners' joint recommendations were echoed in the UN documentation concluding Honduras' review. In September, FI invited an indigenous woman displaced from her land, a mother of five and daughter of an assassinated human rights defender, to deliver a statement at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. Focusing on the human rights violations related to the new Mining Law and especially on violence against indigenous people in their efforts to defend their territories, the statement included her personal testimony and was received by the applause of diplomats.

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JUNE

Statement on rights of indigenous peoples, refugees and migrants during Thailand's review by the UN CESCR

Submission of report for Canada's review by Human Rights Committee

Statement at the UN CESCR on women and children's rights in Uganda

06

Conference on corporate accountability & private-sector participation in the Post-2015 Agenda at the HRC





FOCUS ON: Brazil

There has been a strong push in Brazil to roll back well-established human rights protections for indigenous peoples in order to open the way for expanding extractive industries. The aim is to convert and free up the land and territories of indigenous peoples, peasants, and traditional communities for the unbridled exploitation of natural resources, especially for the expansion of agro-industry and mineral exploration, as well as such as hydroelectric dams, highways, and ports. In many cases the Government has failed to demarcate indigenous lands and failed to guarantee possession of those lands that have been recognized. Criminalization and violence against communities and leaders is intense.

At the request of Franciscan partners in Brazil, FI worked with the well-established and widely-respected Indigenous Missionary Council of the National Bishops' Conference of Brazil (CIMI) to denounce the human rights situation of indigenous peoples at the United Nations, advocating around legislative reforms in Brazil, including revisions to the mining code and proposed constitutional amendments that would negatively impact indigenous peoples' rights.

FI facilitated strategic meetings at the UN, both in Geneva and in New York, for CIMI partners and two indigenous leaders, one from the Terena people, and one from the Guarani-Kaiowá people. The group of advocates gave first-hand accounts of how megaprojects and the policies aimed at promoting them are impacting communities. They met with the Brazilian Mission to the UN, the Holy See Mission, key staff members of the UN Development Programme, and NGO partners including the Mining Working Group and Human Rights Watch. They also met with representatives of the UN Special Procedures, including the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples.

In addition to bringing visibility to the human rights violations being committed against indigenous people in Brazil, they secured a commitment from the Brazilian government to host the Special Rapporteur, who in turn ratified her willingness and interest in visiting the country. Furthermore, their case was mentioned by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in his opening address to the Human Rights Council in September: "Long-standing disputes over indigenous land continue to cause suffering and loss of life in Brazil. I note in particular the killing of a leader of the Guarani-Kaiowá people last month, and I urge the authorities to not only investigate this death, but also to take far-reaching action to halt further evictions and properly demarcate all land."



JULY

National consultation on legally-binding instrument on Business and Human Rights in the Philippines

Submission for Bolivia's UN CEDAW review

07

National consultation in preparation to the UPR of Tanzania

Mobilization of partners at 1st IGWG on business and human rights at the UN



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RODRIGO PERET OFM, is a Brazilian Franciscan friar connected with FI since 1990. He has been involved in the issues of land in rural and urban areas for years. Along with FI and the inter-Franciscan and inter-congregational JPIC Commission, he works to bring together the voices of human rights defenders and affected communities who speak out against mining projects that violate human rights. "It is vital that FI bridges grassroots struggles with general issues at the UN. Meetings happening in Geneva have a reason only if they're an echo of what's happening at the grassroots. FI plays a big role in keeping those conversations relevant."

AUGUST

National consultation on freedom of religion and belief in Indonesia

Lobbying at SDG negotiations in New York on including the right to water in SDGs

15

08

Statement on structural discrimination towards Afro-Colombians at Colombia's UN CERD review

Statement on conflict minerals in the DRC at the HRC



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ASIA-PACIFIC

Franciscans International's (FI) work in Asia-Pacific countries is divided into three main sub-regions: South Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific. With poverty remaining one of the biggest challenges in the region, the Asia-Pacific Programme addresses the impacts of development projects (mining, logging and farming) on the human rights of indigenous and local communities. Special attention is given to the negative impacts of climate change on the full enjoyment of human rights, especially in countries prone to climate disasters in the Pacific. The Asia-Pacific Programme also responds to emerging issues related to human mobility from a human rights perspective, focusing on asylum seekers, refugees, migrant workers and victims of trafficking. In 2015, FI called for greater protection of human rights in Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Myanmar, Nauru, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Papua New Guinea, and West Papua.



SEPTEMBER

Lobbying at the HRC on human rights of asylum seekers to Australia being detained in Papua New Guinea, Nauru and Australia

Brazilian FI partners denounce situation of indigenous children at HRC and CRC

National consultation for Kenya's review by the UN CESCR

Launch of Handbook on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights at the UN in Geneva



FOCUS ON: Thailand

Human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants are of serious concern in Thailand, especially in the fishing and seafood-processing industries. In fact, Thailand is now recognized as a global center for human trafficking; it is a country of destination, origin, or transition for many men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and other kinds of trafficking. Human rights violations against migrants working on fishing vessels include verbal and physical abuse, limitation of food intake, little or no pay, threats of violence, lack of medical access. Instances have been reported in which those who fall ill have been beaten to continue working or left to die and thrown overboard. In some provinces, child laborers were found among the migrant workforce, working in hazardous conditions (excessive heat, in proximity of fire, unsanitary workplace), for more than eight hours a day, and often engaged in heavy lifting. For these children, access to education is obviously neglected.

FI used both Thailand's review by the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in June, and preparation for Thailand's upcoming Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in early 2016, to denounce the situation of migrant workers, especially children, and create greater awareness at the UN about the grave human rights violations they suffer. FI helped gather and organize information from its partners on the field, for a report submitted to the CESCR, and invited national NGO partners to meet directly with relevant UN experts and diplomats in Geneva. The situation of asylum seekers, particularly the Rohingya from Burma, and the rights of indigenous people were also addressed. Many of FI's concerns and recommendations were taken up by the CESCR, requesting Thailand to respond publically on its treatment of migrant workers, asylum seekers, and indigenous peoples in the country.



National consultation on human rights situation in West Papua

Coordination meeting for Latin American Churches & Mining group

Sub-regional workshop for Eastern Africa in Arusha, Tanzania

OCTOBER



FOCUS ON: West Papua

The human rights situation in West Papua has not been improving significantly for indigenous Papuans, including Papuan human rights defenders. Despite a change in the Indonesian government in 2014, mass arrests, arbitrary detention and extra-judicial executions are routine events. The right to free assembly is consistently hampered, and indigenous peoples are persecuted regularly. Between 2006 and 2015, nine students were killed by Indonesian police and military forces in one district alone, and in all cases of extra-judicial executions in Papua and West Papua since 2013, the victims have been indigenous Papuans. Currently, indigenous Papuans make up less than 45% of the population and overt racism is part of security forces' daily practice in West Papua.

FI focused its advocacy work at the UN on these issues, condemning the involvement of Indonesian security forces in violent acts against indigenous Papuans. It also denounced the lack of concrete follow-up of previous UN recommendations on the protection of indigenous peoples and human rights defenders, despite public promises to improve the situation. FI facilitated face-to-face meetings between victims and human rights defenders from Papua and diplomatic delegations at the UN, and created spaces for them to express their concerns to UN experts and relevant diplomats. Relying on the information provided by FI and its grassroots partners, several UN Experts sent communications to the Indonesian Government regarding the on-going human rights violations in West Papua.

In order to present comprehensive documentation on human rights violations in West Papua and recommendations to improve the situation, FI released a joint publication with the International Coalition for Papua (ICP) entitled, "Human Rights in West Papua 2015". One of the key issues in the report is the demographic decline of indigenous Papuans which shows the marginalization of the indigenous population in West Papua.

Furthermore, in West Papua and other parts of Indonesia, FI and Franciscans in Papua worked with Catholic and other networks to coordinate a robust, coordinated, and effective response to human rights violations in the country. This helped raise public awareness about the seriousness of the human rights situation in West Papua.



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NOVEMBER

UPR lobbying on Myanmar and Australia

Advocacy tour on Business & Human Rights for Colombian partner

UPR lobbying on Rwanda



FOCUS ON: The Philippines

The Philippines suffer from the consequences of aggressive extractive industry and the numerous human rights violations that are linked to it. FI focuses its advocacy work in the Philippines on protecting victims of abuses committed by corporations, and is therefore calling for the adoption of an international legally-binding treaty on business and human rights.

To this end, FI continued using the situation in Tampakan, in the South of the Philippines, to illustrate the importance of addressing human rights violations perpetrated by business, and to convince decision makers that a treaty is indeed necessary.

The Tampakan Copper-Gold Project in Mindanao, is one of the largest copper-gold mines in Southeast Asia. The project directly impacts watersheds, vast areas of forest, and ancestral domains that are sacred for local populations. An estimated 5000 people, mostly indigenous, will have to be re-settled as a consequence of the mining project, and many more are likely to be affected. The operations also endanger food and water sources, impacting living conditions, potentially leading to social unrest. The risks of pollution, erosion, siltation, flash floods, landslides, and other seismic geo-hazards are very high.

For these reasons, the Bla'an people and other indigenous tribes are protesting against the mining project. In response to the strong opposition of local populations, military forces and paramilitary groups have been deployed to the area and are acting in defense of the investment. The militarization has resulted in the murder of anti-mining and

JAYBEE GARGANERA is the National Coordinator of the Alliance Against Mining in the Philippines. He has experienced death threats and the murder of several anti-mining leaders in his alliance. FI first invited him in 2013, to speak at international level about his experiences, and to network with other grassroots activists. "The people's resistance will get the victory, but it is vital to have a chance to speak of our local struggle internationally, to share good and well-researched documentation, and to be able to confront government representatives here at the UN."



DECEMBER

Conference on human rights and climate change in Asia-Pacific region during COP21

Advocacy tour in NY to denounce human rights violations caused by Mexico's Programa Frontera Sur

Submission to the HR Committee on the situation of so-called witch children in Benin

Press Conference on Handbook on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights at the Vatican



indigenous leaders, and other countless violations of human rights. The company maintains that it respects and upholds the United Nations' Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, but in practice, they use military force to maintain control of the mining area, and the company admittedly funds the governmental police forces assigned to the area.

In July 2015, FI facilitated the participation of Filipino NGOs involved in the Tampakan case in negotiations of a legally-binding treaty on Business and Human Rights, bringing first-hand information and grassroots expertise to the table. FI also supported partners in presenting the Tampakan case

to the Vatican in July, alerting Catholic leaders to the gravity of the situation, and asking them to provide support for the victims. The impacts of extractive industry on women, as demonstrated in Tampakan, was also documented and highlighted to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women which will meet to review the Philippines in July 2016.

With the help and coordination of FI, the Tampakan case is receiving international attention as a flagship case for the need for an international legally binding instrument for businesses to respect the rights of the local communities in which they operate.

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FOCUS ON: Australia

Since the beginning of 2001, Australia has adopted a policy, the "Pacific Solution," which focuses on the non-acceptance of asylum seekers arriving to the country by boat. Instead, Australia sends them offshore to be processed in immigration detention centers on Nauru and Manus Island (Papua New Guinea) to wait for their status as refugees to be determined.

Although the policy was officially ended in 2008, the Australian government continues to send thousands of asylum seekers to Regional Processing Centers on Nauru and Manus Island. This is a glaring failure in Australia's compliance with international human rights and humanitarian laws.

In 2015, FI took the lead in publically denouncing the situation and urging the Australian government to respect its international and humanitarian obligations towards asylum seekers, through statements, conferences, and reports based on first-hand information. A former staff of the Australian detention centre on Manus Island gave her personal testimony at the UN during the September Human

Rights Council in the presence of several diplomats, including the Australian Permanent Mission. She told the distressing stories of the detainees she had met and described the conditions they lived in, describing the sub-standard accommodation, inadequate medical care, loss of personal property and violence perpetrated by staff – with apparent impunity. She described the loss of hope and mounting despair experienced by these asylum seekers, as they were told they would be detained indefinitely. Her story resounded with many, and several positive comments were expressed to FI for publically engaging Australia on the issue.

In preparation for Australia's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2016, more than 60 UN member states expressed their concern about the situation of asylum seekers in Australia, reflecting FI's concerns and recommendations voiced to the UN throughout the year.



CAROL HUCKER worked as a case-worker with asylum seekers detained on Manus Island, where she witnessed various human rights violations. She left the detention centre promising the men she worked with, that she would bring their case to international awareness. "I'm here in Geneva, thanks to FI, to give these men a voice. It is my way of heeding their plea to do something, rather than just offering them my passive understanding."

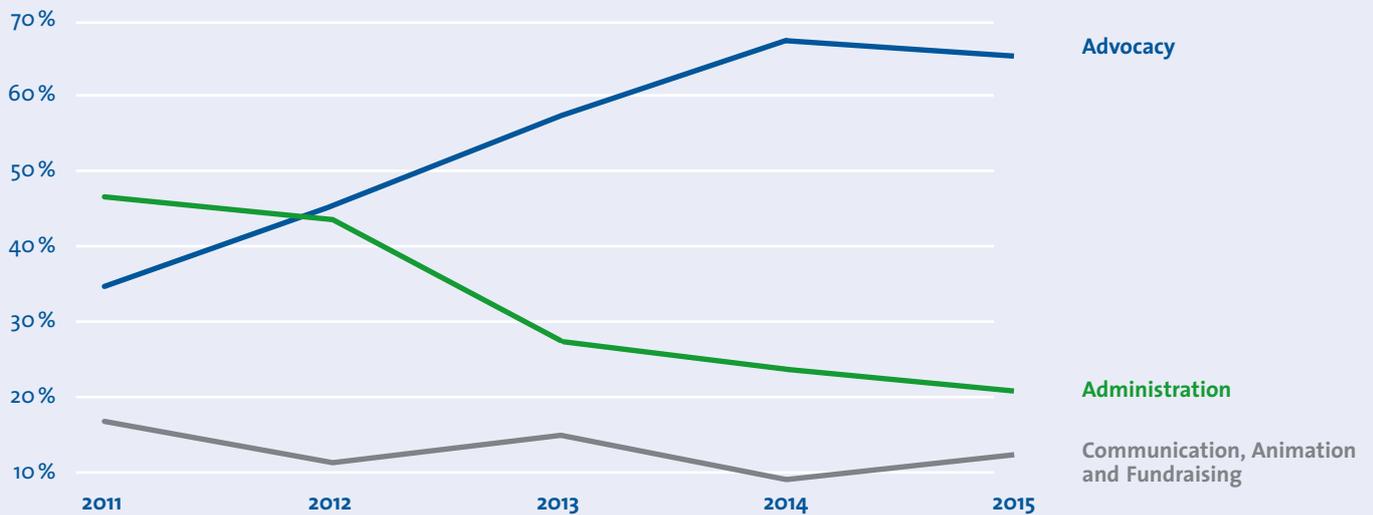


FINANCIAL REPORT

2015 started with the Swiss National Bank’s surprising decision to lift the fixed minimum exchange rate between Euros and Swiss francs (1EUR = CHF1.20), introduced in 2011. During the period that followed, 1 Euro was barely worth 1 Swiss Franc. For FI, who receives a significant proportion of its donations and grants in Euros but pays many of its expenses in Swiss Francs, this could have been extremely detrimental in terms of finances. As shown by the financial summary, FI was able to make it through this challenge, thanks to the generous support of certain Franciscan groups, especially the Capuchin Swiss Province and Missionszentrale der Franziskaner from Germany.

Throughout 2015, FI’s relationship with institutional donors and other funding agencies was strengthened. Not only did grant amounts increase by 21 %, but FI also established tight links with several funding agencies. Together, we worked in collaboration towards common goals, with complementary approaches, and FI was commended for its human rightsbased approach to poverty and development issues. We invited one another to events at the UN, consultations, and meetings at field level. We expect that these efforts will contribute to making FI’s income more sustainable from 2016 onwards.

Trends in Expenditure



STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

(Reviewed by PricewaterhouseCoopers SA)

	CHF	Percentage
Income		
Franciscan Orders and Congregations	411,558	34.8 %
Funding Agencies and Foundations	742,904	62.8 %
Other Donations	28,356	2.4 %
Total income	1,182,818	
Expenses		
Advocacy	(648,874)	66.3 %
Communications, Animation and Fundraising	(133,728)	13.7 %
Administration	(196,421)	20 %
Total operating expenses	(979,023)	
Non-Operating Income and Expenses		
Depreciation	(9,798)	
Interests and bank charges	(1,760)	
Re-invoicing	4,755	
Foreign exchange loss	(36,242)	
Total non-operating expenses	(43,045)	
Contingency Reserve	160,750	

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www.franciscansinternational.org

Make a donation

FI is entirely dependent on donations from Franciscan orders and congregations, funding agencies and institutions, parishes, and people sensitive to Franciscan values of solidarity, peace, social justice, and respect for the environment.



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Franciscans International

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IBAN: CH69 0024 0240 3573 8401 F

EUR Account No: 240-357384.61W,

IBAN: CH85 0024 0240 3573 8461 W

USA:

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Address of Bank:

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Account Number: 292500458265

ABA Number: 021000021

Currency of Account: USD



ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CERD	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CERN	Episcopal Commission on Natural Resources
CESCR	Committee on Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights
COP21	Conference of Parties (UN Paris Climate Talks)
CREDDHO	Centre de Recherche sur l'Environnement, la Démocratie et les Droits de l'Homme
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
FI	Franciscans International
HRC	Human Rights Council
IGWG	Inter-Governmental Working Group
JPIC	Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OFM	Order of Friars Minor
OFMCap	Order of Friars Minor Capuchins
OFS	Secular Franciscan Order
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
SINFRAJUPE	Inter-Franciscan Service for Justice, Peace and Ecology
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review

Imprint

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Franciscans International

A voice at the United Nations

Our Vision

A global community in which the dignity of every person is respected, resources are shared equitably, the environment is sustained, and nations and peoples live in peace.

Our Mission

We are a Franciscan voice at the UN protecting the vulnerable, the forgotten, and the wounded earth.