

Strengthening Franciscan voices at the United Nations



Proposal to the Franciscan Family in the US and Canada



Franciscans International
A voice at the United Nations

Cover photo: © Br. Christian Seno, OFM.
Franciscan Friar working with refugees and migrant children at the Franciscan shelter, La 72, in Tenosique, Tabasco (Mexico).

WHAT IT IS ABOUT

To strengthen Franciscan voices at the United Nations Headquarters, **Franciscans International is giving a fresh start to its office in New York.**

In times when human dignity is brushed aside, compassion is forgotten, and environmental and human rights are under constant threat, **Franciscans play a key role in supporting and voicing the concerns of those who live on the margins of society** and who are particularly disadvantaged.

Migrants, especially unaccompanied children and women, undoubtedly belong to this category. They are not only highly vulnerable to rights abuses and violence, but often do not have access to justice.

We are extremely concerned by the growing issues surrounding migrants around the world. Across Mesoamerica, the Mediterranean, and SouthEast Asia, vulnerable migrants looking for better life and work opportunities often fall prey to ruthless smugglers and arbitrary policies.

Our impact as Franciscans

While migrants and other marginalized individuals and groups are taken care of by Franciscan communities and missions at the local level, **Franciscans International adopts a complementary approach** at the international level by:

- Translating the concerns of affected local communities into powerful messages that are heard by decision makers and influences international negotiations;
- Providing an empowering space for Franciscans and community leaders working at the grassroots to voice their concerns, and get visibility;
- Developing strong connections with national and local Franciscan networks that are in direct contact with affected populations.

We have an impact thanks to first-hand information provided by Franciscans and affected communities we work with. **Our common voice at the United Nations matters, precisely because we put those who are marginalized at the center of discussions** to promote and protect their rights.

The support we need

To do this job, we are largely dependent on donations from Franciscan orders and congregations and people sensitive to Franciscan values of solidarity, peace, social justice, and respect for the environment.

For our work in New York, the support of the Franciscan community in North America is key.

To be able to do our work in 2018, we need to raise

\$US 90,000

Will you help us to continue upholding Franciscan values and voices at the United Nations in New York?
Discover more about our work and how your contribution can make a difference!

WHO WE ARE

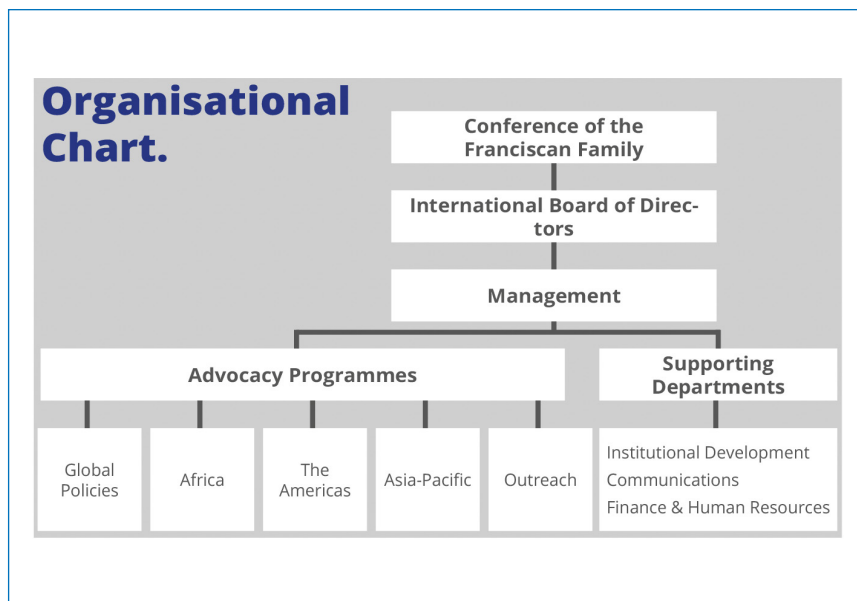
In 1982, Brother Dionysius Mintoff, OFM from Malta and Sister Elizabeth Cameron, OSF from the Sisters of St Francis of Clinton, Iowa, realized that **there was a dire need for a Franciscan voice at the United Nations** to negotiate solutions to the challenges of our ever-more interdependent “Common Home.” A voice reflecting not only the work Franciscans do in disenfranchised communities across the globe, but also the values promoted by St. Francis and St. Clare of love, peace, respect for everyone’s dignity and inclusion. That same year, Franciscans International was founded in New York.

The newborn organization began promoting Franciscan values at multiple levels and, in 1989, was officially recognized by the UN Department of Public Information as a full-fledged NGO.

In 1997 we opened a second office in Geneva, Switzerland, to influence the dynamics of the Commission on Human Rights (and later of the Human Rights Council), while maintaining our headquarters in New York.

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: being a Franciscan voice at the United Nations protecting the vulnerable, the forgotten, and the wounded earth through advocacy.



Since its creation, Franciscans International has developed its expertise in protecting and defending human and environmental rights, and people’s dignity through advocacy.

This organization is unique: it brings us Franciscans, a large and diverse family, together around a common cause. Indeed, **FI is the only common project of the Conference of the Franciscan Family (CFF)**, which appoints our International Board of Directors (IBD).

OUR VALUES

Humility: we strive for a simple way of life, recognizing our interdependence with all creation.

Reconciliation: we want to be in harmony with the world around us and promote peace.

Fraternity: we have a profound concern for the marginalized and the oppressed, and maintain a radical openness to “the other”.

Justice: we respect the dignity of every person and all creation, and work for equality.

WHAT WE DO

Today, much like Saint Francis did in his Letter to the *Rulers of the Peoples*, **we encourage national and international “civil authorities to be mindful of Gospel’s” values in policy-making.** That is why, over the years, Franciscans International has developed an expertise in defending human dignity and the integrity of creation through advocacy at the United Nations.

Why advocacy matters

The core business of Franciscans International is **human rights advocacy.** Advocacy means a set of actions that seek to influence decision makers at UN and national levels. Thanks to its **General Consultative status with the UN**, FI uses advocacy as a tool to combat human rights abuses.

We strongly believe that advocacy is one of the most powerful means to **ensure sustainable solutions and real change.** Whenever significant changes in policy are needed, advocacy has a role to play in influencing key leaders to make decisions that will improve the lives of millions of people over the long-term, through structural changes. In addition, advocacy is a process that empowers people, including the most marginalized, to participate in decisions that affect their own lives.

Thanks to its long experience at the UN, FI operates through a **multifaceted advocacy strategy** in order to maximize efforts and ensure consistency in various lobby actions.

A RECOGNIZED ORGANIZATION

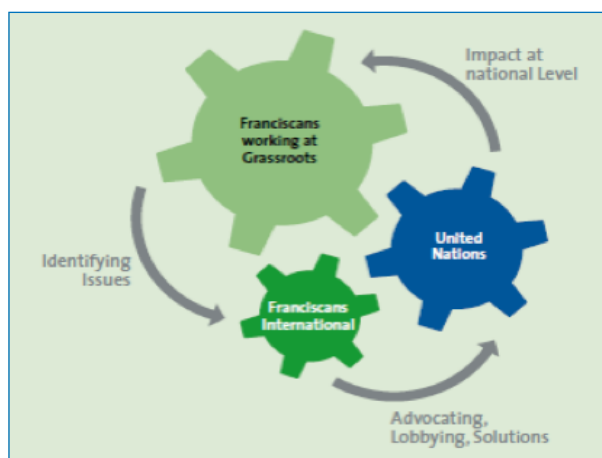
In 1995 the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has granted to our Franciscan organization the General Consultative Status. This is the **highest status for an NGO** within ECOSOC and is given only to organizations that “are closely involved with the economic and social life of the peoples of the areas they represent and whose membership, which should be considerable, is broadly representative of major segments of society in a large number of countries in different regions of the world” (ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31).

Currently, only **137 out of 5209** organizations working with ECOSOC have been granted the General Status.

Franciscans International’s advocacy methodology at a glance

A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH

- Collaborating with Franciscan working at the grassroots, with and for the most disadvantaged individuals and groups
- Building strategic partnerships
- Training and engaging Franciscans in UN advocacy
- Linking national and international advocacy strategies, to have an impact at the local/national level.



OUR WORK IN NEW YORK: HIGHLIGHTS

Putting people before numbers: Advocating for migrants at the United Nations

Sr. Diana Muñoz Alba, FMM, is the director of the Santa Martha Migrants' Shelter, in Salto de Agua, in Chiapas, a region where hundreds of migrants enter Mexico. In early May 2018, **Franciscans International facilitated her presence in a high-level interfaith conference** entitled *Sharing the Journey of Migrants and Refugees: An Interfaith Perspective on the Global Compacts*, organized under the auspices of the Holy See and Caritas Internationalis. The conference aimed to strengthen the process of the Global Compact on safe, orderly and regular migration, which is currently under negotiations at the United Nations.

Sr. Diana was one of the main speakers in a side-event to this conference, organized by Franciscans International and the Scalabrini International Migration Network. Her strong statement **highlighted human stories of migrants, including their hopes, in Central America and the United States**. Whether in transit or settled, migrants from this region, **especially girls and women**, suffer from countless violations of their rights, such as assaults, kidnappings, sexual violence, and extortion. They are also targets of violent operations carried out in collaboration with the national army, the navy, state and municipal police.

In this high-level context at the United Nations, Franciscans International **chose to bring forward and highlight grassroots voices with concrete experience of migrants' challenges and aspirations**. By doing so with our partners, we presented our approach and practice to the participants of the high-level conference, coming from different faiths and backgrounds. More importantly, we breached this space, usually confined to policy and decision-makers, and humanized their discussions by inviting them to relate to individuals' stories.

1180

*People welcomed at the
Santa Martha Migrants'
Shelter in one month only*



*[At the Shelter] I give a daily human rights talk so that people have information about their rights as migrants, about the possibility of seeking refuge in Mexico, and I provide personal advice to those who want to know more about the procedure of asylum seeking. However, this can become frustrating since **the objective of many people is not the American dream but simply a safe place to live free and in peace.***

(Sr. Diana Muñoz Alba, FMM)

(above) © Sr. Diana Muñoz Alba, FMM. Migrants praying in the Santa Martha Migrants' Shelter.

Connecting inter-Franciscan initiatives with international negotiations

As part of our long-standing commitment and support to the Migrant Center at the St Francis of Assisi Church in Manhattan, we recently joined some members of the Franciscan Family for the *Franciscan Common Ground*. **This inter-Franciscan conference on migration aimed to unify and strengthen our Franciscan voices on migration issues.**

While much of the discussion was focused on the most recent developments in the United States, our intervention provided our Franciscan sisters and brothers with updates from the progress made at the UN level, including our positions and advocacy messages. **This conference was an exceptional opportunity for FI to share its work to the wider Franciscan community in New York and to discuss the common Franciscan values that drive our work.**

Our presentation allowed for an informed discussion on potential next steps for the Franciscans who are engaged at the federal and state level on the issue of migration—including the Franciscan Action Network and various JPIC members.



Other activities of FI's New York office in 2018

Migration

- Lobbying and advocacy towards diplomats and other stakeholders in the frame of negotiations around Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (ongoing)
- Assisting the Franciscan migrant shelter "La 72", based in Tabasco, Mexico, for its international advocacy at the United Nations (ongoing)
- Organizing a regional meeting in the Americas for Franciscans to share experience and strategies related to migration (November)
- Engaging in joint strategic actions with the Migrant Center at the St Francis of Assisi Church in Manhattan (ongoing)



(above) © FI. Inter-Franciscan meeting in New York. FI's New York team, from left, Marina El Khoury, FI's UN Representative in New York; Sr. Odile Coirier, FMM; Br. Christian Seno, OFM. In the centre Fr. Julian Jagudilla, OFM; Fr. David Couturier, OFM Cap. (below) © Br. Christian Seno, OFM. Sr. Diana Muñoz Alba, FMM talking with migrants at FI's event in New York.

Indigenous peoples & Human trafficking

- Enabling the participation of a representative of an indigenous leader in the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to address the issue of collective rights to lands in Brazil in partnership with the Conselho Indigenista Missionário, CIMI (April)
- Facilitating the participation of Canadian Franciscans in the UN Universal Periodic Review of their country, highlighting issues related to human trafficking, and the right to water of indigenous peoples (April)



Adriano Karipuna (above left) shares his experiences as a leader of the Karipuna People during a side-event organized and moderated by Franciscans International. Photo: © Luiz Roberto Lima



Members of JPIC El Salvador participating to a FI's training in the country delivered by Mr. Ulises Quero (center) FI's Americas coordinator. On the left, Ms. Sandra Ascencio, OFS, JPIC coordinator for El Salvador, who will participate in the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York this July.

Extreme poverty & Sustainable Development

- Inviting the JPIC coordinator for El Salvador to advocate on the right to water and disaster preparedness with communities at the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (July)
- Engaging the UN Commission on Social Development on strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all (February)
- Supporting communities in self-organizing through our Handbook "Making human rights work for people living in extreme poverty" (ongoing)

Outreach

- Reaching out to Franciscans in the US and in Canada with news and spiritual reflections (ongoing)
- Sharing stories in Franciscan publications across North America (ongoing)

Women

- Engaging the UN Commission on the Status of Women on challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls—issues that are cross cutting with all the above mentioned topics (March)

WHY AND HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT US

Why should you support Franciscans International New York's Office?

We **unite** different Franciscan **voices**, and **reflect** Franciscan **values** in our everyday work at the United Nations, in **servicing communities**, and in **protecting their rights**.

We are a **bridge linking national and international advocacy** efforts based on the concerns of Franciscans and other partners in the field.

We are the **common project of the Conference of the Franciscan Family** and therefore **rely on your support** to fulfill our mission **to protect marginalized and disadvantaged individuals and groups**, as well as **our wounded earth**, through advocacy.

2018 Budget New York - Summary	
Income (USD)	Budget 2018
Franciscan Orders and Congregations - Unrestricted	90000
Franciscan Funds - Restricted	34250
Funding Agencies and Foundations	40000
Total Income	164250
Expenses (USD)	Budget 2018
Advocacy	108130
Communications, Fundraising, Outreach	31900
Administration	21134
Total Expenses	161164
Contingency Fund	3086
Total Expenses + Contingency	164250

Please help us reach the **US\$ 90,000** we need from Franciscan Orders and Congregations in North America to strengthen our common Franciscan voice at the United Nations.

How can you support Franciscans International New York's Office?

To donate you can

SEND A BANK TRANSFER (NEW ACCOUNT NUMBER)



Account holder: Franciscans International

Address of account holder: 246 E. 46th St., Apt. 1F,
New York, NY 10017-2937

Bank Name: JPMorgan Chase Bank

Bank Address: 1 United Nations Plaza,
New York NY 10017 USA

Account Number: 158883683

ABA Number: 021000021 / Currency: USD



USE PAYPAL

<https://franciscansinternational.org/donate/>

SEND US A CHECK



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For further information, please contact us

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



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