



## TRAINING REFLECTION: MAY 2018

# PRIORITY LINES OF ACTION

### 1. Introduction

When we speak about **Priority Lines of Action (PLA)**, we mean that these are the lines of action along which we suggest orienting our common work within AIC as more than 100,000 volunteers across the world. We establish them during our International Assemblies, to which we invite representatives from the 53 countries on 4 continents that together form the **International Association of Charities (AIC)**.

Drafting Priority Lines of Action (previously known as Operational Guidelines) is an excellent idea that began during the Assembly in Assisi in 1990 and has continued up to the present day.

This topic is important and so it will be the subject of the training reflections for the months of May and June 2018. In this first reflection, we will recall the different stages we have been through so far and how we have evolved in the implementation of our actions on behalf of people who are more vulnerable and marginalised because they live in situations of poverty.

### 2. A Brief History of our Journey so far

**First Stage: *From Assistance to Participation*** (1973-1985)

**Second Stage: *From Participation to Self-Promotion*** (1985-2002)

- **1990, Assisi – First Priority Lines of Action** (previously Operational Guidelines): Self-promotion, solidarity, training and communication
- **1994, Antigua – PLA:** A culture of solidarity and self-Promotion

- **1998, Querétaro – PLA:** Be a force of transformation in the face of poverty, in society and in the Association

### **Third Stage: From Self-Promotion to Co-responsibility and Empowerment (2002-2011)**

- **2002, Nice – LAP:** Social co-responsibility, institutional strengthening, empowerment
- **2005, Santo Domingo –** Key words for our work: Political action, coherency and trust
- **2007, Rome and 2009 Mexico City – LAP:**
  1. Accompany women towards a personal change and an awareness of responsibility.
  2. In AIC, strengthen our commitment to the poverty of women.
  3. In society, give people and authorities a sense of responsibility.

### **Fourth Stage: From Co-responsibility to Coeducation (2011-2020)**

- **2011, El Escorial and 2013, Bangkok – LAP:** Education, a two-way process
- **2015, Guatemala – LAP:**
  1. Promoting **education** as a two-way process based on the strengths of each one and on the principles of Social Justice.
  2. Reinforcing our Vincentian identity while preparing to celebrate our 400th anniversary.
- **2017, Châtillon**

The **Priority Lines of Action** put forward at the Assembly in Châtillon in 2017 are also focused on Education, but we will speak about them in the next Training Reflection in June 2018.

### **Why Education?**

Because at AIC we are convinced that **education is the most important means of eradicating poverty** and that it generates change both in volunteers and in people living in poverty, helping them to grow, become independent, achieve their full potential and become active agents in their own development.

**What is education?** When we speak about education, we understand it as a person’s growth in every dimension. Let us remember that St Vincent, with his vocabulary of the 17th century asked us **“to accompany corporally and spiritually”** with an **“affective and effective”** love towards the people around us.

For St Vincent, education is closely linked with human development. A long time before human rights were enacted and established, Vincent de Paul struggled relentlessly to

ensure that the poor, who had no rights to anything and never received even the slightest consideration from a contemptuous and unsympathetic society, could live in dignity.

It is also important to note that Saint Vincent, through his personal experience, discovered that **the poor are our school**, an irreplaceable source from which we can learn lessons for life and work. **“The poor are our lords and masters”**. With them we learn the ways to respond to the calls of charity and justice. In the difficult life of the poor we are called to discover, learn and appreciate God’s wisdom and from this undertake educational work.

### **3. Acting in conformity with our Priority Lines of Action**

It is necessary to develop the **educational dimension** in all our work with people living in vulnerable situations. We must work within a dynamic of reciprocity and our actions should be educational. At AIC, the **Priority Lines of Action** help us to energise our Vincentian work and bring it up to date. These guidelines should be studied, reflected upon and adopted, they are a light that enables us to carry out our service better, they give us a horizon that requires personal and community **change** and they propose new attitudes, methods and perspectives for our work.

#### **AIC’s Suggestion for Reflection**

1. In your life as volunteers have you had the opportunity to experience a change that education (or training) has produced in you or in any of the people living in poverty with whom you work? Share your experiences.
2. Name at least 3 things that you have learned during your experience of working with people living in poverty.
3. Are you familiar with the Priority Lines of Action and their evolution since we began using them in 1990? Have you applied them in your group? How?