**Chapter II**

**AIC’s Mission**

* AIC’s Vision and Mission
* The Foundations of AIC’s Mission
  + - The Gospel
    - St Vincent’s values
    - The Social Doctrine of the Church
* **AIC’s Journey**

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| *AIC’s social and pastoral action is guided by the Church’s social teaching and the philosophy of Saint Vincent.*  **Participation** (1976): AIC commits to the participation of everyone in solving their own problems, and in the life of their community.  **1981**: Publication of AIC’s Basic Document.  **Solidarity** (1985): Solidarity forms an explicit part of AIC’s reflection. Solidarity means shared responsibility, fraternity and participation among volunteers and with those living in poverty.  **Self-help** (1990): **First Operational Guidelines:** self-help, solidarity, training and communication. This concept of self-help came from Latin American volunteers who drew on their experience and their conviction that those living in poverty have the right to take part in their own progress.  **Force of transformation** (1998): **“Be a force of transformation in the association, in the face of poverty and in society”.** The transformative force is selected as a driver for personal action with those living in poverty in society.  **Co-responsibility** (2002)**: Social co-responsibility** for Peace: Our specific way of working for peace is to fight poverty and injustices, which are always sources of conflicts. The concept of **Empowerment** is developed to reduce poverty and instigate sustainable development. It is the recognition of the capacity and right of those who are empowered to take responsibility for creating their own future. It is for us as volunteers to support them, help them develop their potential and work with them so they find their own solutions.  **Systemic Change** (2007)**:** This method, suggested by the Vincentian Family, invites us to see each person, not as an isolated individual, but as an individual surrounded by all their family, social, professional relationships. This involves changing viewpoint, defining with the person concerned the goal, the “dream” that they wish to achieve, and then, along with them, seeing which relationship, which link they can change. At that moment, the whole of the “system” in which the person lives will change.  **At each of these stages, AIC has made a firm commitment in favour of :**   * **Improving the situation of women:** Since 1980 AIC has been doing significant work to denounce injustice against women, to defend their rights and to fight against all the forms of violence of which they are victims. In 2001 in Fortaleza (Brazil), AIC created and distributed a “Manifesto against violence towards women”. * **Reducing the poverty of women in different cultures** (2007): Our actions and projects are rooted in the various cultures that form the international profile of AIC and it seems vital **to understand how the cultural values and traditions of a society influence the role of women and men, and create or aggravate the poverty of women.** We are convinced that each woman has the capacity to impel her own culture to grow, and to find in it the resources to construct her life project. How? Above all, by developing places for women to speak, by **education** for a better balance of roles among men and women, by training in human rights, especially those of women and by working in a network on projects to improve women’s circumstances. * **Education** (2011-2015)as a means to prevent poverty. Saint Vincent said that education is one of the most valuable tools to achieve *“dignity for the poor”*. The person living in poverty is a social player in their own right. If they are given the opportunity to develop their own abilities, they can take the place and role that belong to every human person.   The **educational project** does not consist of a vertical, passive transmission of knowledge. It is as much about **learning from the other** as **allowing the other to learn**. “*The teacher learns while teaching, the learner teaches while learning.”* (Paulo Freire).  We need each other to build a more just society together. This is why education must be present and a driving force in any charitable action by AIC, to promote the establishment of a fair and interdependent society.  AIC is on the road, on a never-ending journey…  Following Saint Vincent, let us be fascinated, captivated   * By the love of Christ towards the poorest; * By his way of putting the “little ones” in the centre: “*What do you want me to do for you?”*   **Only the strength born of conviction that God is love, communion and justice can build “another possible world” of peace, solidarity, justice and freedom.** | From assistance to  participation  and  self-help  co-responsibility  and  empowerment  Systemic change, a new way of looking  to understand situations of poverty  Using the present as a lever for the future  Raising awareness and preventing injustice against women  Women and poverty in diverse cultures  Making women aware of their dignity and their rights  *“The more women are educated and their rights are recognised, the less their children are hungry”*  O. de Schutter, UN  A two-way exchange  *“have a heart that sees with the eyes of God”*, Pope Benedict XVI  Contributive justice  The enchantment of the love of God for the little ones. |

**Questions to reflect on in groups:**

1. **What are the essential elements of AIC’s participation in improving the situation of women?**
2. **How does AIC commit to improving the situation of women?**
3. **What role does education play in the prevention of poverty?**