**Chapter I:**

**AIC’s Identity**

* Our Origins
* The Motivations for our Action
* **The Profile of our Volunteers**
* **Working as a Team**
* **The Organisation of the AIC Network**

**The Profile of AIC Volunteers**

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| Whatever the status of the volunteer: full member, associate member or collaborator, volunteering at AIC has its requirements and demands for a commitment to be made.  **Committed volunteers:** Commitment is freely given, it takes account of each person’s motivations, capabilities and availability in terms of health and time. This means that the continuity and efficiency of the action taken can be ensured.  **Generous volunteers:** Volunteering is unpaid, and does not seek any affective or moral gratification (freely given help does not prevent the repayment of personal expenses incurred in voluntary action).  **Responsible volunteers:** Responsibility is an obligation to do what one has promised to do. It leads directly to trust in the members of our group, the people being supported and partner organisations.  **Competent volunteers:** AIC volunteers accept on-going training adapted to their action. Amateurism is all the more dangerous as the work is carried out with vulnerable people. Individual or particular actions, or even emotional involvement, can only partially reduce the problems.  **Volunteers rooted in Saint Vincent’s project:**  AIC is the place where, in the light of the Gospel, volunteers work to change situations of poverty; they follow in the footsteps of their founder, St Vincent: “*support the poorest people spiritually and materially”*. | **A commitment**  **to continuity and efficiency**  **selfless**  **responsible**  **well trained**  **based on Vincentian spirituality** |

**Working as a Team**

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| **Meaning and Method**  *The group unites its strengths around a common project; the key moment is the team meeting.*  Saint Vincent united the goodwill of many in order to help **one** family living in poverty. He knew that one person alone wouldn’t be enough.  Working as a team:   * Multiplies strengths: everyone contributes their time, energy and personal qualities. * Guarantees that the action will continue in the long term.   To work as a team, members require:   * **Respect**: Every point of view is legitimate and completes the others * **Coordination**: Everyone has a clearly defined role * **Communication**: In confidence * **Commitment**: From everyone, according to what has been planned.   Team meetings are:   * The moment when **communication** is privileged: A place for everyone to stay informed and have their say. Solutions are found to difficulties encountered by the team and future activities are organised. * A place for **revitalisation and progress**: Together we situate our actions in St Vincent’s spirituality. In this way we enter into a process of continuous conversion – conversion through little things – it is a question of being open to changing our attitudes. | **Teams,**  **communities of**  **faith,**  **communion,**  **work,**  **sharing**  **and friendship.**  *“They will be united among themselves like sisters that our Lord has linked through his love”.*  St Vincent de Paul  *“What would Christ do if he were in my place?”* |

**The Organisation of the AIC Network**

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| **Local groups:**  **Over 5100 local AIC groups** have their own juridical status governed by statutes, led by a president and a board of management.  These local groups:   * *Work in a limited geographical area: a district, town, city or parish;* * *Respond to calls from those in situations of distress in their surrounding area, with appropriate actions.*   **National associations:**  **53 national AIC associations**, bring together the local AIC groups in their countries. They elect a national president and board of management. Each association is responsible within its country for coordination between groups, the training of its members, fundraising and advocacy.  **The international association:**  **AIC International**brings together the 53 national associations.National presidents elect the international president and the members of the Executive Board.  AIC International:   * *Leads the national AIC associations and coordinates their reflection and their action.* * *Represents its members within international agencies and takes part in the common action to fight poverty and injustices in order to move forward.* * *Promotes exchanges between local and/or national associations to promote solidarity at the global level.* | **Local**  **National**  **Global**  List of member countries at:  [www.aic-international.org](http://www.aic-international.org)  **Work on the ground gives AIC its authority** |

**Questions to reflect on in groups:**

1. **As an AIC volunteer, which of the 5 qualities mentioned here would it be most important for you to develop? What practical measures could you take in order to do this?**
2. **After having analyzed all the points concerning working as a team carefully with your group, are you convinced of the advantages of working in this way? Could you give concrete examples for each of the points covered in the context of your Vincentian work?**
3. **In your opinion, what are the advantages for your local group of belonging to a national and international association?**