



GRF 2019 - INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES PANEL - 18.12.2019

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M&R Section - DPIHD

On 1 January 2017 Pope Francis established the Migrants & Refugee Section within the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. The main task of the Section is to assist local Catholic Churches in responding to the challenges posed by contemporary migration. Since many of the current migration flows can be ascribed to forced migration, the engagement with asylum seekers and refugees have been a priority in the last three years.

Three levels of M&R engagement:

Global

- 1) Support the Secretariat of State and the Permanent Missions of the Holy See in the bilateral and multilateral exercise, through the provision of sound and certified data and information collected at the grassroots level.
- 2) Launch and support campaigns aimed at promoting the integral human development of migrants and refugees, according to the principle of the Social Teaching of the Church.
- 3) Contribute to change the narrative about migrants and refugees disseminating the good news (stories of solidarity, integration, inclusion, contribution to common growth) particularly through the social media.

Regional

- 1) Promote the transnational cooperation of local Churches in the same region, so as to better coordinate the actions catering to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.
- 2) Promote the collaboration of local Churches with institutional partners in the same region and their engagement in the regional processes as partners in the action.

Local

- 1) Assist Local Churches in assessing the challenges posed by contemporary migration flows and structuring the responses into long term programmes
- 2) Scout for private donations to support the programmes of the local Churches

- 3) Contribute to the sensitization of local communities about migrants and refugees so as to produce a positive attitude and eradicate discrimination and xenophobia

What are some of the initiatives that the Holy See has implemented to engage local refugee and host communities in addressing xenophobia and supporting social cohesion?

It would be difficult to present, even briefly, the enormous effort produced by the Catholic Church aiming at caring for asylum seekers and refugees in all continents, addressing xenophobia and supporting social cohesion. Thus I would like to focus only on those, which present a relevant interfaith component.

With this in mind, I would like to highlight few best practices.

- In 2017 the Catholic Church in Europe has implemented 8000 different programmes addressing the needs of 1.100.000 migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. The great majority of the beneficiaries of the services offered were Muslim. Local Christians in a similar situation of vulnerability were always included as beneficiaries of the same programmes. It is worth noting that 30 programmes were unidentified as interconfessional and interreligious initiatives, addressing the spiritual needs of the target population.
- In the Cox Bazaar camp, the Catholic Church in Bangladesh is catering to 75.000 Rohingya people, offering services to a Muslim population, with a personal engagement of Pope Francis. Among the local staff many are Muslim, selected among local population. Catholic and Muslim aid workers and volunteers are trained together and work together, sharing common values and ideals of solidarity.
- In 2019 more than 2000 refugee children in Jordan have received backpacks and school utilities thanks to a joint programme undertaken by the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation and International Catholic Migration Commission. Majority of the beneficiaries were Muslim.
- From 2018 ten Bishops Conferences in South America are caring for Venezuelans on the move united in a programme called "Puentes de Solidaridad". In 12 months they reached out to more than 250.000 people, Venezuelans, other migrants and local people in a situation of vulnerability. This has been a key feature of all the activities entailed in the programme, always assuring a particular attention to the spiritual dimension of the beneficiary and to the interconfessional/interreligious dialogue.