



Franciscans International

A voice at the United Nations



Franciscans International

Annual Report 2024

Imprint

Franciscans International: 37-39 Rue de Vermont, P. O. Box 104, CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland,
+41 22 7 79 40 10, geneva@franciscansinternational.org

Design:  **meinhardt** Verlag und Agentur, Friedrich-Ebert-Straße 16, 65510 Idstein, Germany,
T +49 61 26 9 53 63-0, info@meinhardt.info

Cover photo: Brother Michael Flores **OFMCap** and FI visit a fisherfolk community affected by
liquid natural gas production in the Philippines

Photo p. 5: Franciscans International takes part in a symposium on integral ecology at Sienna
College (United States)

Franciscans International Annual Report 2024

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/ Message from the President /

Dear friends,

May the Lord give you peace! On behalf of the International Board of Directors and the staff of Franciscans International, it is my pleasure to present our 2024 Annual Report. In this document, you will find not only a comprehensive overview of our work but also personal stories from Guatemala, the Philippines, Madagascar, and the United Kingdom.

These stories capture both the ministry of Franciscan sisters, brothers, and other fellow travelers who refuse to remain silent in the face of injustice, as well as the growth of FI as an organization, which in 2024 hosted partners from four continents at the United Nations. I would like to express my deep appreciation to our staff and our sisters and brothers at the grassroots, without whom our work would not be possible. Together, we continue to build on the cornerstone of our ministry: bridging the gap between local, marginalized communities and international policymakers.

One example of this work is the publication on the right to a healthy environment that FI developed in collaboration with Astrid Puentes, a prominent human rights lawyer who now serves as the UN Special Rapporteur on the environment. The recognition of a healthy environment as a human right was a key victory for FI, which was part of an international coalition that won the prestigious UN Human Rights Prize for its efforts toward this goal. However, this was never the endpoint.

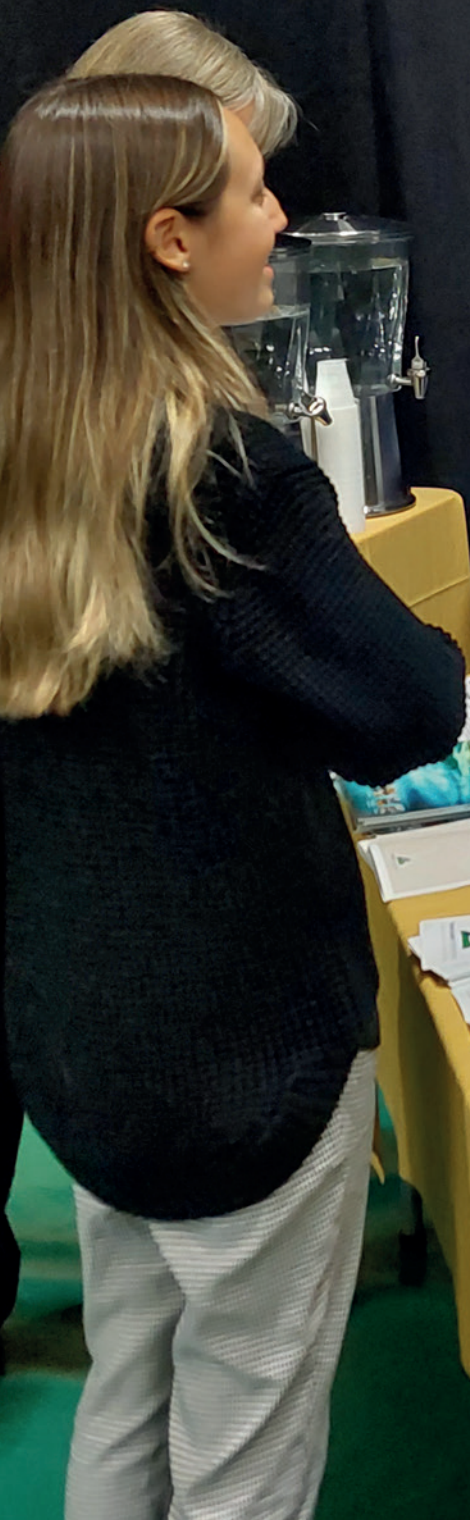
The right to a healthy environment would be meaningless if it were not realized and defended. This is why we talked to Franciscans who are actively working to protect our Common Home. Our publication distills the lessons they have learned into tools that other affected communities can use to assert themselves at the UN. As we prepare to celebrate the 800-year anniversary of the Cantic of Creatures, it is one way in which FI ensures that the decisions made at the UN are not a one-way street.

None of this work would be possible without you. We are deeply grateful to all who support FI through their prayers, efforts, and financial donations. Your support remains essential to bring the Franciscan message of dignity, care, and compassion to the international community.

At a time when human rights and humanitarian work have come under renewed attack, we must remain steadfast and draw on the lessons of Saint Francis and Saint Clare to shape global debates and policies. The UN remains the prime forum where the international community can gather in dialogue and strive toward common solutions for a more just and equitable world. In these difficult times, the values that guide the Franciscan Family remain as relevant as ever to the entire Earth community: FI will be there to promote human dignity, care for creation, dialogue, and peace.

Faternally,

Michael A. Perry OFM
President of the International Board of Directors



/ 2024 in numbers /

Empower

Influence

Over **300** 
Franciscan Family members
joined in 25 gatherings.

8 
in-country consultations

111 
Franciscans and other
partners who benefited from
capacity/strategy building

15 
Franciscans and other partners
advocating at the United Nations

14 
advocacy events and
conferences

50 
advocacy interventions and
submissions at the United Nations

7 
United Nations outcome
documents influenced

70% 
of FI recommendations included
in United Nations reports

*Calling
attention*

*Preventing
further violations*

*Building pressure
for change*

/ Our focus /



Environmental
justice



Extractive
industries



Human rights
defenders



Indigenous
peoples



Peace and conflict



Freedoms of assembly
and expression



Marginalized
groups

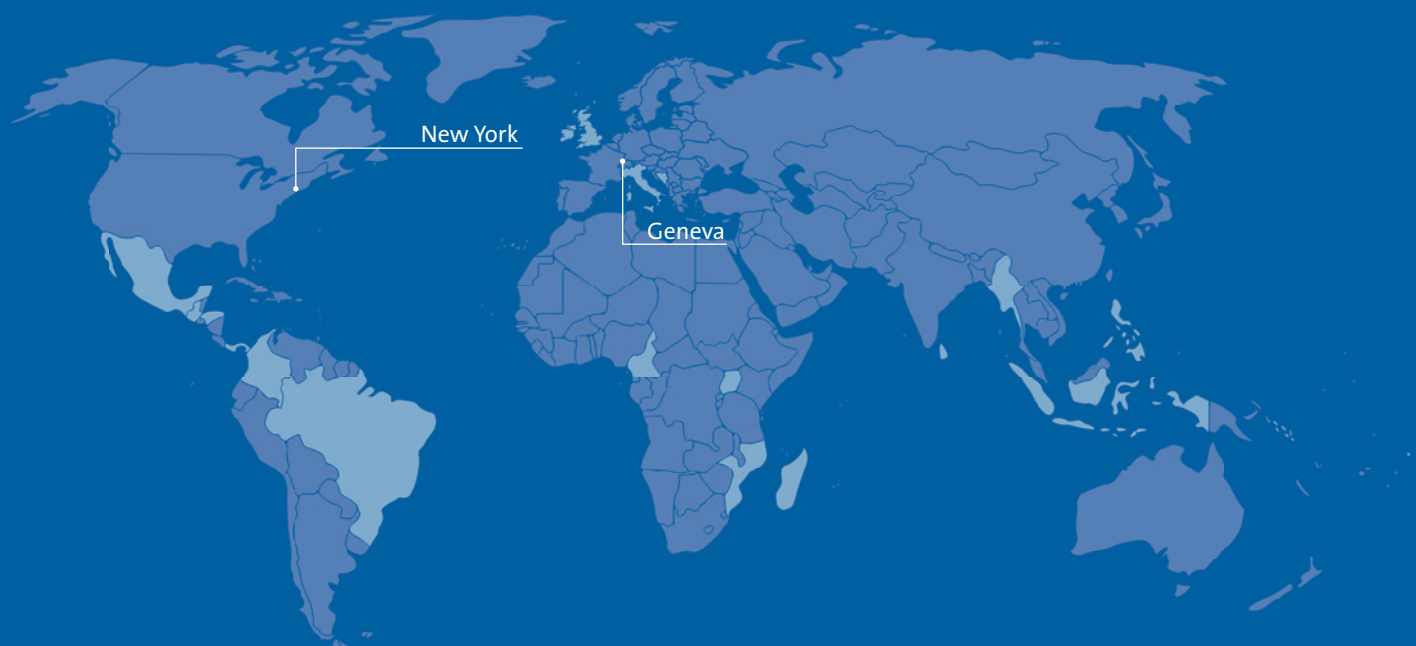


Migration and
displacement



Rights to water
and sanitation

/ Where we work /





SOMOS COMUNIDAD

LIBERTAD

IS HAND

Inclusión

Equidad

cultura

La Flor

My

Dignidad



/ About Franciscans International /

Franciscans International is a non-governmental organization in General Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. At the core of our mission is the belief in the dignity of all people, which is lived out in our commitment to protect and preserve human rights and the environment.

Since our establishment in 1989, we advocate together with and on behalf of Franciscans to prevent, denounce, and address human rights violations through the strategic use of UN processes and mechanisms. We do so by bringing cases of discrimination and violence committed against individuals and groups living at the margins to the attention of international policymakers, and by influencing UN decision-making and standard-setting processes accordingly on various issues and countries.

Following their spirituality and values founded on simplicity, fraternity, peace, and care for creation, Franciscans often live and work with disadvantaged groups and individuals, have their trust, and are among the closest to their concerns. In doing so, many Franciscans are human rights defenders, and FI serves as their voice at the UN.

With offices in Geneva and New York, FI operates under the sponsorship of the Conference of the Franciscan Family (CFF), which represents the various branches of the Franciscan Family. The Ministers General of the Order of Friars Minor (OFM), the Conventuals (OFMConv), the Capuchins (OFMCap), the Third Order Regular (TOR), the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS) and the President of the International Franciscan Conference of the Sisters and Brothers of the Third Order Regular (IFC-TOR), along with the International Board of Directors that also includes a representative of the Anglican Society of Saint Francis, work with FI staff to ensure that the organization supports and maintains the Franciscan Family's commitment to justice and peace throughout the world.

*A mural in the La Honda
neighbourhood in Medellín
(Colombia), where Franciscan
friars support migrant
communities from Venezuela*

/ Advocacy in 2024 /

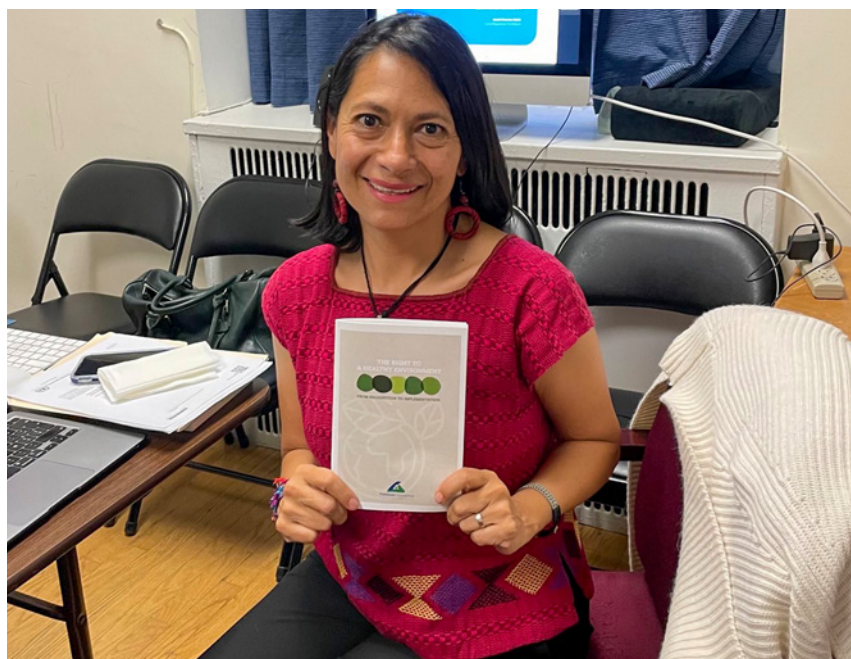
In 2024, Franciscans International deepened its work with Franciscan partners around the world to bring the voices of communities affected by human rights violations to the United Nations (UN). While their contexts are each unique, the human rights challenges facing the people Franciscan sisters and brothers serve are often part of global and intersecting problems. By creating bridges between the grassroots and the UN system, we contribute to finding fair, collective, and rights-based solutions. In a year shaped by growing geopolitical tensions, democratic backsliding, and worsening climate impacts, we remained committed to promoting accountability and ensuring that the voices of people on the margins are heard by those in positions of power.

Care for Creation

Throughout the world, already marginalized communities are among the hardest hit by the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss – and their voices are often the least likely to be heard in global policymaking debates. In 2024, Franciscans International continued to bring the daily realities, best practices, and calls to action of local communities to the UN. Our statements and submissions to various UN mechanisms raised concrete cases from our partners, from Brazil and Central America to Madagascar and the Philippines. Likewise, collective efforts through civil society and faith-based alliances strengthened the linkages between human rights and environmental issues by highlighting concrete experiences and cases raised at the grassroots.

Almost five decades in the making, the global recognition in 2021 of the human right to a healthy environment was an important victory for FI and fellow advocates for environmental justice. Now, we are focusing on ensuring that this right is fully implemented and those violating it are held accountable. In September, we launched “The Right to a Healthy Environment: From recognition to implementation”, a new resource to help affected grassroots communities better understand and monitor how the right to a healthy environment can be realized. Drawing on experiences, best practices, and strategies shared by our partners working at the local level during an FI workshop in 2023, this practical tool also explores lessons learned and offers strategies to tackle challenges to promoting and defending this right.

Astrid Puentes, the current UN Special Rapporteur on the environment, with FI's latest publication

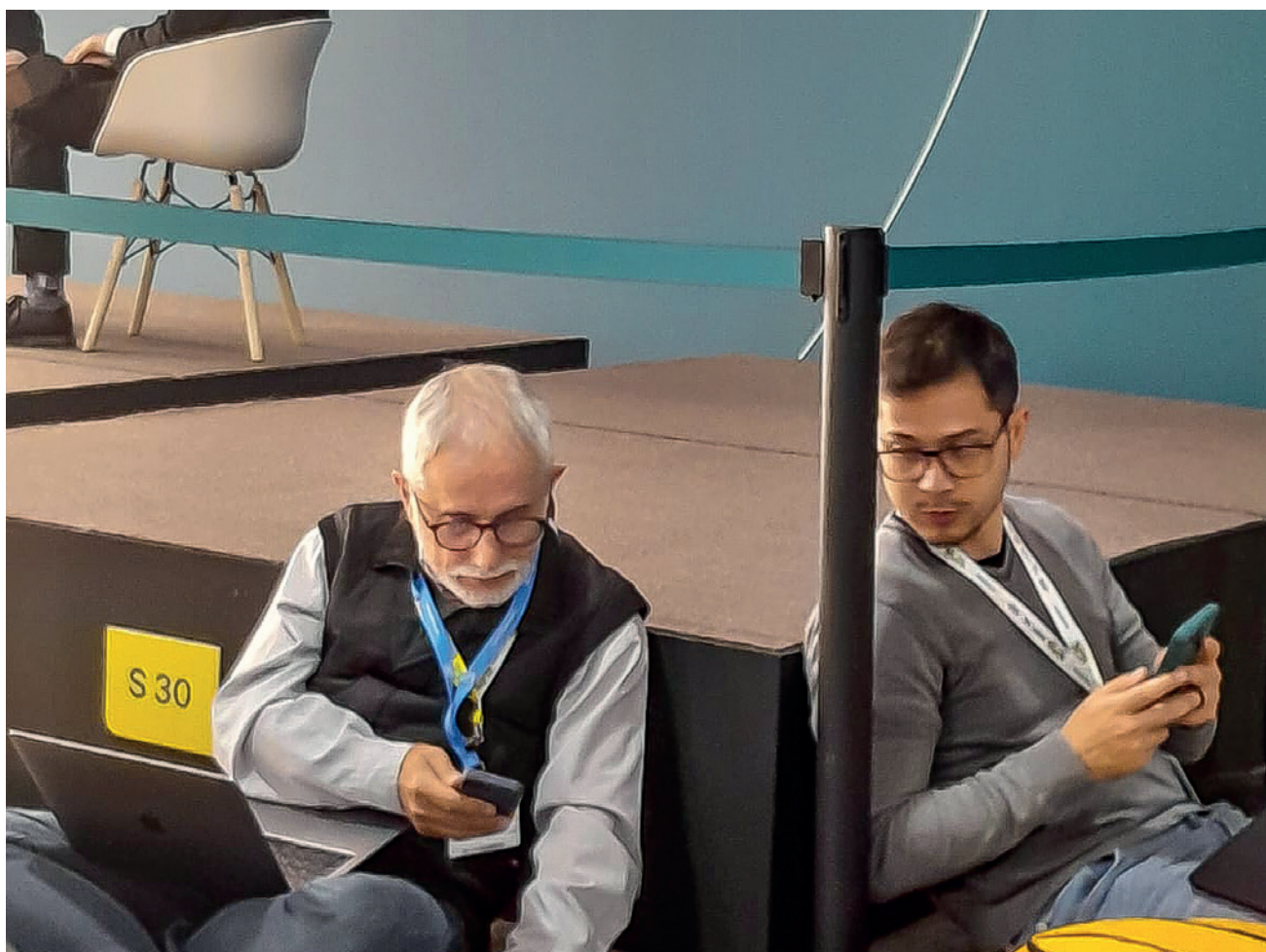


Along with other faith-based organizations, FI has also taken the lead to bring attention to the issue of non-economic loss and damage (NELD) in UN spaces. A relatively new policy question, NELD considers climate change impacts that are not easily quantifiable in economic terms but are still very real and damaging to human rights and well-being, for example, the loss of territory, cultural heritage, identity, or language. With strong, long-term roots in affected communities, faith-based organizations are uniquely placed to confront the issue of NELD and bring concrete, local cases of the devastating impact of these losses.

A study by the Geneva Interfaith Forum on Climate Change, Environment and Human Rights (GIF), which FI co-facilitated, examined such firsthand experiences to give a more comprehensive understanding. We presented our findings during two side events during various UN sessions, bringing a human rights perspective to this issue. FI also co-organized a side event on NELD during the 56th session of the UN Human Rights Council as part of our efforts to integrate this issue into broader UN debates on climate change.

Advocacy for a human rights-based approach to NELD was also a top priority for FI's delegation to the 29th UN Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Azerbaijan, building on the establishment of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage during the previous COP28 in Dubai. We co-organized two related side events on ways to protect the rights of affected communities and capture the full range of damages beyond material and financial loss. To promote care for our Common Home more broadly, we co-organized the traditional Talanoa Interfaith Dialogue and hosted a series of online Franciscan Climate Talks. As part of the COP29 Interfaith Call to Action, FI stressed the need for urgent climate action, including phasing out fossil fuels.

Brother Rodrigo Peret OFM and Igor Bastos of the Laudato Si' Movement during the UN Climate Conference in Baku



Business, human rights, and Indigenous Peoples

Unchecked business activities have an increasingly negative impact not only on the environment but also on the enjoyment of a broader range of human rights. In a global economy, where corporate operations routinely transcend national borders, accountability for human rights violations by businesses remains a pressing concern. In 2024, Franciscans International continued its engagement with the open-ended intergovernmental working group (IGWG) on transnational corporations and other business enterprises, advocating with civil society coalitions for a robust, binding treaty to regulate business activities under international human rights law.

Despite procedural delays and attempts by corporate interests to co-opt the process, the tenth IGWG session in December saw progress in the negotiations, with wide recognition of the urgent need for stronger, international standards to govern the conduct of transnational corporations. Throughout the year, FI built toward the session through several statements during relevant UN debates, participating in the IGWG's intersessional meeting, and hosting side events, notably during the UN Commission on the Status of Women. During the IGWG itself, we led and joined interventions that highlighted the importance of preventing environmental harm and human rights violations, ensuring robust legal accountability, and safeguarding the rights of affected individuals and communities.



FI's advocacy for greater corporate accountability through the IGWG and other UN mechanisms is driven by the work of grassroots partners, who identify human rights issues affecting local communities and document violations and abuses. In some instances, this involves raising awareness on ongoing situations. For example, at the Human Rights Council in September, we highlighted different ways in which exploitation of liquid natural gas continues to displace communities and fuel a human rights crisis in northern Mozambique. In other instances, Franciscans stand with communities that seek accountability and reparations for past violations. This was the case in April, when we hosted a Friar Minor from Brazil to share testimonies with the Special Rapporteurs on the rights to health, a healthy environment, and toxic wastes related to the ongoing, devastating impacts of the 2015 collapse of the Fundão dam in Mariana, Minas Gerais.

Indigenous Peoples are at particular risk of such human rights violations and of the consequences of broader corporate impunity. Indigenous Peoples' rights to own, use, and control their ancestral lands are frequently violated as a result of large-scale agricultural, extractive, and, increasingly, green-energy activities. In submissions to UN Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures, FI called for greater accountability from the Indonesian government concerning the Merauke National Strategic Project in West Papua, which has seized traditional lands of Indigenous Papuans for the development of sugarcane, rice, and other industries. We also hosted partners from Guatemala to sessions of the Human Rights Council to raise issues of the forced displacement of Indigenous communities and the nonconsensual use and contamination of water and other environmental degradation of their lands because of mining operations.



Indigenous participant during a side-event at the UNPFII

During the 23rd session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the first-hand accounts of human rights violations by businesses were a common theme. FI, as part of the Mining Working Group, supported spaces – such as a breakfast dialogue and a “North-South Conversation” – for Indigenous participants to share how their lands and livelihoods are under threat from business activities and climate change. Together with the US Treaty Alliance and the Mining Working Group, FI also organized side events to discuss strategies to strengthen collective action for more robust accountability instruments and support self-determination among young Indigenous representatives.

Human dignity and an end to impunity

Franciscans around the world accompany individuals and communities whose fundamental rights are denied and whose dignity is under threat. A central pillar of Franciscan International’s work is advocating at UN mechanisms to end impunity and ensure accountability when human rights are violated. This can take the form of ensuring that existing laws and safeguards are operationalized and implemented. For example, in Uganda, FI listened to the concerns from partners about a lack of enforcement of legal provisions against trafficking and child marriage, as well as governmental backsliding in protecting children’s rights. Building on past collective advocacy, FI made interventions to the UN on these and related issues. We were encouraged that the Committee on the Rights of the Child requested follow-up on several measures to protect women’s and girls’ rights.

In other places, FI focused on achieving accountability for past human rights violations while also identifying ongoing assaults on human dignity. We continued to call attention at the Human Rights Council to the state of impunity for extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and abductions in the Philippines. These continue despite the current government’s stated intention to end the so-called “war on drugs” during which over 30,000 people from primarily poor communities have been killed. FI urged an independent assessment of the UN-mandated Joint Programme for Human Rights at its conclusion and joined other organizations in raising concerns about the lack of credibility of the follow-up body created by the government.

The Franciscan delegation to the Commission on the Status of Women outside the UN in New York



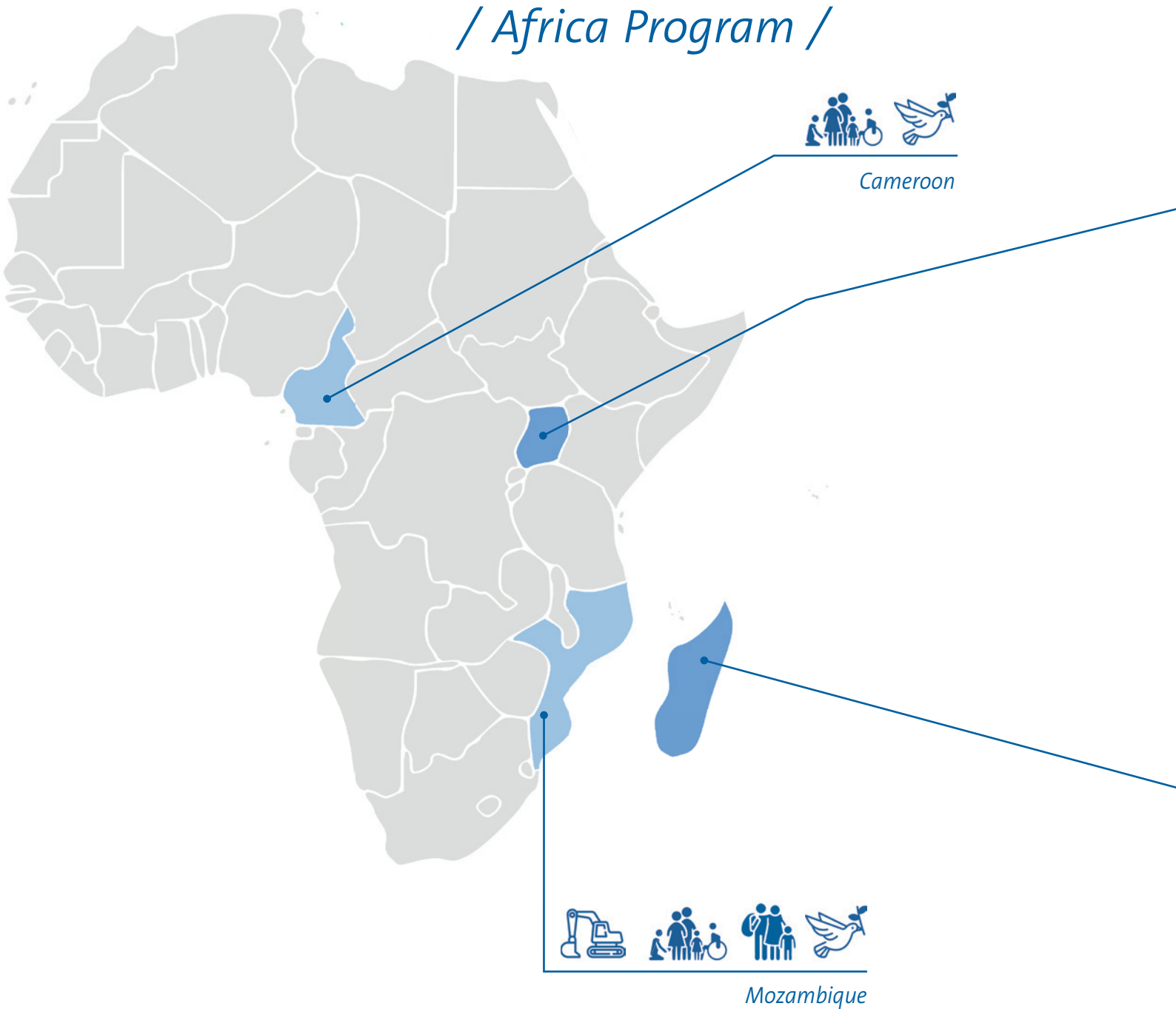


A local civil society representative holds a presentation during an FI workshop in Kampala, Uganda

Franciscans have a long history of advocating for the human rights of migrants and other people fleeing poverty, insecurity, persecution, or climate change. FI works to ensure that UN bodies hear the experiences of people on the move – who face hostile policies, practices, and attitudes – and take action. We facilitated first-hand testimony from the United Kingdom on the impacts of legislation like the Safety of Rwanda Act that allows deportation during the processing of asylum claims, in violation of domestic and international law. Recognizing that the issue of migration in Europe is much broader, we joined Franciscan efforts at the regional level and participated in the strategic planning of the newly created Franciscan Mediterranean Network during a workshop in Morocco.

FI also continued its close collaboration with the Franciscan Network for Migrants (FNM) in the Americas to build advocacy capacity and bring attention at the UN to the situation of migrants in the region, who are forced by punitive policies and insufficient institutional protection mechanisms to make increasingly dangerous journeys. Drawing on information collected through the FNM's migrant shelters, we urged a review of Mexico's continued focus on militarization and criminalization in its migration policies, a case emblematic of broader trends seen on the continent. As part of the ongoing strengthening of the network, we provided documentation support to their team in Colombia and facilitated an online training for all FNM's country teams on the Cartagena +40 process when the FNM found it strategic to contribute to this process that seeks to strengthen comprehensive protections for forcibly displaced people in Latin America and the Caribbean.

/ Africa Program /



the Africa program in a nutshell

- Supported 10 local groups in 4 different countries.
- Hosted 2 partners from Madagascar.
- Organized 2 capacity-building missions to Madagascar and Uganda.
- Delivered 3 statements during relevant UN sessions.
- Submitted 3 reports to the UN, including on climate-induced migration in Madagascar, children's rights in Uganda, and on grave human rights violations in Cameroon.
- Published 1 advocacy paper to summarize our calls for the UPR Madagascar.



Uganda



Although there are legal and constitutional safeguards in place to protect the rights of women and girls, many of these remain poorly implemented or enforced. Entrenched patriarchal structures, harmful traditional practices, and extreme poverty all compound to expose women to a range of human rights violations, including female genital mutilation, forced early marriages, and human trafficking. With weak government structures, it is often left to civil society to support the victims.

Starting in 2021, Franciscans in Uganda decided that their local work needed to be strengthened once again by raising these issues at the UN to compel their government to act. Following several capacity-building workshops organized by FI, they submitted reports to the Universal Periodic Review, the Human Rights Committee, and the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. In September, FI visited Kampala to take stock of the advocacy efforts so far and prepare a report for Uganda's review by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as an additional conduit to share evidence and policy recommendations with the government.



Madagascar

Prolonged droughts and subsequent famines in southern Madagascar have fueled a wave of internal migration to the north, kindling rising tensions between displaced and host communities. This movement of people exposed serious shortcomings in the government's response, both to the immediate needs of the communities and to tackling the underlying environmental causes that have exacerbated the crisis. In May, the Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation of the Secular Franciscans, conducted a series of interviews in the northern region of Mahajanga to better understand the challenges ahead.

FI traveled to the country shortly afterward to help connect their findings to wider networking and advocacy opportunities, including Madagascar's upcoming Universal Periodic Review (UPR). In November, we hosted two young secular Franciscans to take part in the UPR pre-sessions, speaking as part of the civil society panel. They were also able to meet with several permanent missions in Geneva to elaborate on the recommendations they had made to their government regarding climate-induced migration, environmental protection, and extreme poverty.



Uganda
Sister Leonie Kindiki LSOF takes part in a preparatory meeting ahead of Uganda's review by the Commission on the Rights of the Child

Madagascar
Young Franciscans during a capacity building workshop in Antananarivo



Fabiola Todisoa OFS –

“It was essential for me to be there.”

In Madagascar’s Deep South, the climate crisis is unfolding slowly but relentlessly. For years, communities have struggled with poverty, food insecurity, and weak infrastructure. But in recent times, the effects of climate change – especially prolonged droughts and increasingly erratic rainfall – have pushed families into desperate situations. To escape hunger, more and more people are fleeing to the north, increasing pressure on host communities and fueling tensions.

“Internal migration is a topic that has not yet been discussed during Madagascar’s Universal Periodic Review,” says Fabiola Todisoa, a young secular member of Madagascar’s Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission (JPIC). “It is important to talk about this now because many human rights are being compromised by environmental destruction.”

Fabiola traveled to Geneva in December 2024 to participate in the pre-session of the Universal Periodic Review, a UN mechanism for examining the human rights situation in every country on a rotating basis. She was selected to speak on the civil society panel and deliver a formal statement to diplomats, highlighting the links between climate change, displacement, and the right to a healthy environment.

“Many people have worked so that I can pitch to the UN, and those people trust me, so it can be stressful,” she reflects. “It was essential for me to be there.” While in Geneva, Fabiola also met with diplomatic missions and other civil society groups working on similar issues. Together, they pushed for concrete recommendations to the Malagasy government, including the need for an internal migration policy, stronger protections for displaced persons, and environmental governance that considers the needs of marginalized communities. For Fabiola, the experience reinforced the importance of collaboration in advocacy work: “We can’t work alone,” she says. Looking ahead, she hopes that the dialogue she helped open in Geneva will lead to meaningful change at home. The first milestone has been achieved. Internal migration was mentioned for the first time as a human rights issue during the UPR, and the government has accepted to work on the recommendations to strengthen relevant policies and take the necessary measures to protect internally displaced persons and address the impacts of climate change in the country.

Julio Gonzalez –

“We are a façade democracy.”

In the dry hills of southeastern Guatemala, the promise of gold has brought nothing but conflict. For nearly two decades, the Canadian-owned Cerro Blanco mine has loomed over the communities of Asunción Mita, its tunnels scarring the land and threatening vital water sources.

Julio Gonzalez, a long-time member of the environmental collective Madre Selva, has supported local communities in their efforts to defend natural resources and reclaim their rights. “Many workers were physically affected,” he recalls. “People lost their hearing, suffered accidents, but the mine simply did not take care of them.”

Cerro Blanco was initially planned as an underground mine, but when that design failed, a new owner proposed switching to open-pit extraction under the same license. This mining project threatens cross-border contamination of Lake Güija and the Lempa River in El Salvador. “It’s not just a local problem,” says Julio. “Lempa River supplies water to 4 or 5 million Salvadorans.”

Through Madre Selva, Julio has helped build a meticulous case, encompassing everything from legal appeals to independent water monitoring, as well as arsenic testing among former mine workers and long-term health impact studies. “Once a mine closes, arsenic starts to show up in drinking water, in wells, and in rivers,” he says. “It doesn’t disappear”. Madre Selva has also documented systemic failures in Guatemala’s mining oversight. Despite legal requirements, authorities allowed companies to avoid consultation with affected communities. “Right now, the biggest social conflict that exists is around projects that were authorized by the State, where these rights were violated,” says Julio.

Julio’s collaboration with the Franciscans on the Cerro Blanco mine and other extractive cases brought him to Geneva in 2024. At the Human Rights Council, he could denounce the lack of proper consultation, the high levels of corruption, and the impacts of extractive industries on the environment in his country. “We are a façade democracy,” he said. “The power is not on the side of the most dispossessed people. It is with large transnational companies.”

Despite threats, criminalization, and chronic underfunding, Madre Selva continues its resistance. “I appreciate the opportunity to work with Franciscans, who invited me here,” Julio said. “It gives us the chance to say what we have to say, to make visible the arbitrariness and abuses committed by corporate interests. We hope that little by little, credibility will be restored in these international spaces.”



/ Americas Program /



Mexico



Guatemala

Mining has caused a wide variety of problems in Guatemala, ranging from the contamination of water to rising tensions within nearby communities. Widespread corruption and a judiciary co-opted by special interests severely restrict domestic avenues for accountability and enable the criminalization and harassment of human rights defenders working to protect land and the environment.

In May, we visited four local communities, all of which were affected by mining operations, and participated in a Franciscan workshop for 'Guardians of the Common Home'. The first-hand information gathered during this mission formed the basis of subsequent interventions at the UN throughout the year. FI also hosted a grassroots representative at the Human Rights Council in Geneva to highlight the challenges faced by Guatemala's Indigenous Peoples, who have been forced to accept extractive industries on their traditional lands without their free, prior, and informed consent.



Panama



Colombia

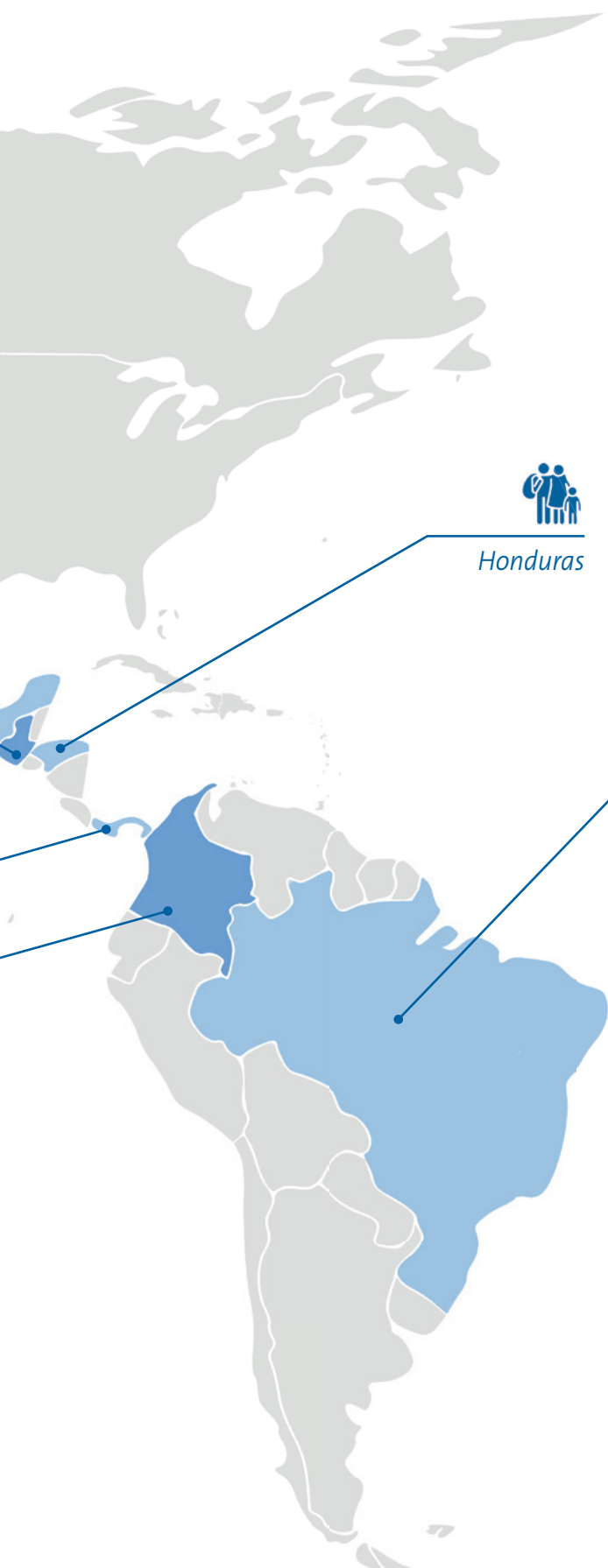
Colombia is hosting nearly 3 million Venezuelans, who crossed the border fleeing the dire economic situation and political repression. Despite the government issuing temporary protection permits to most of these migrants, they still face a multitude of challenges, including barriers to accessing healthcare, discrimination, and exploitation. Embracing a "culture of encounter", Franciscans are offering them various kinds of support, ranging from providing psycho-social support to building and reinforcing networks of solidarity and mutual aid.

Building on these connections, the Franciscan Network for Migrants (FNM) has started a research project to gain a deeper understanding of the specific challenges faced by Venezuelan migrants. In August, we joined Franciscans in Armenia, Cali, and Medellín to take part in a series of focus group discussions. The publication will be finalized and presented by the FNM in 2025 to the Venezuelan groups and other stakeholders at the local and international levels.



Guatemala
Participants during the workshop of 'Guardians of our Common Home' in San Juan Sacatepéquez

Colombia
FI takes part in a focus group discussion with Venezuelan migrants in Armenia, Colombia



Honduras



Brazil

the Americas program in a nutshell

- Supported 10 local groups in 7 different countries.
- Hosted 7 partners in Geneva from Brazil, Guatemala, Mexico, and Panama.
- Contributed to 1 regional capacity-building workshop of the Franciscan Network for Migrants in El Salvador.
- Submitted 4 reports to the UN, notably on the human rights violations against Indigenous Peoples and on harmful migration policies.
- Delivered 17 statements during relevant UN sessions.
- Organized 3 side events on climate-induced displacement and regularization of migrants and 1 consultation with the Special Rapporteur on human rights and climate change.
- Collaborated with partners to publish 6 infographics in English and Spanish on current trends in migration, regularization processes, and climate displacement.

/ Asia-Pacific Program /



Sri Lanka

Six years after a terrorist attack on Easter Sunday killed 296 people, surviving victims are still waiting for justice. Despite several investigations, evidence of serious lapses by leading politicians and security officials has been repeatedly ignored or brushed aside. This lack of accountability fits within a general climate of impunity in Sri Lanka, which extends from human rights violations committed during the country's civil war to the exploitation and abuse of tea plantation workers.

FI again welcomed Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, Archbishop of Colombo, to Geneva to speak in favor of a Human Rights Council resolution promoting reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka. The resolution was eventually adopted and extended the mandate of the Sri Lanka Accountability Project, which is charged with documenting and collecting witness testimony of gross human rights violations, including those related to the Easter Sunday attacks.

the Asia-Pacific program in a nutshell

- Supported 24 local groups in 5 different countries.
- Hosted 5 partners in Geneva from Indonesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka.
- Supported 1 partner to improve English fluency and 1 partner for a human rights training.
- Conducted 1 country mission to Indonesia, including strategic visits to West Papua, Jakarta, and to Suva (Fiji).
- Delivered 13 statements during relevant UN sessions.
- Submitted 6 reports to the UN on the situation in West Papua, the Solomon Islands, and the Philippines.
- Conducted 1 online workshop for partners in the Solomon Islands to prepare the country's Universal Periodic Review.
- Organized 2 side events on extrajudicial killings in West Papua and the Philippines.



Myanmar



The Philippines



Indonesia

The human rights crisis in West Papua persists unabated, with ongoing violations that include extra-judicial killings, internal displacement due to armed conflict, restrictions on civil liberty, and, recently, an increasing number of land-grabbing cases to develop palm oil plantations and other mono-agriculture. As access by humanitarian organizations, journalists, and international observers remains restricted, the Franciscans and other church groups are among the few able to document the situation and provide aid to people displaced by conflict and development projects.

FI welcomed Brother Alexandro Ranga OFM in Geneva to highlight these issues during Indonesia's examination by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the UN Committee on Civil and Political Rights. Meanwhile, Franciscans also initiated new efforts to strengthen our advocacy throughout the Pacific. In Fiji, we met with civil society and faith-based actors as a first step to push governments in the region to consistently raise human rights violations in West Papua in bilateral meetings and international forums.



Sri Lanka
Father Everest Dias Anthonyiah
delivers a statement to the Human
Rights Council

Indonesia
Franciscans International meets
with Peter Loy Chong,
Archbishop of Suva



Solomon Islands



José Rico OFM Cap – “When nature is trampled and exploited, who is affected?”

Nicknamed “the Amazon of the oceans,” the Verde Island Passage is a biodiversity hotspot, both above and below the waters. For generations, local communities have made their livelihoods on the shores, relying on the rich fish stocks and tourists drawn to the pristine beaches. Today, this life is at risk: authorities in the Philippines are planning a massive expansion of Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) infrastructure in the region. Although the government maintains that this will boost economic growth and move the country away from coal, the people in Santa Clara know how high the real price of development can be.

Since an LNG terminal was constructed on the edge of this small fisherfolk community, bunker ships transporting fuel from Japan and the Gulf States are permanently moored off its shores. The seabed was dredged to allow access to these massive vessels, destroying the fishing grounds. Despite claims by the local authorities that the LNG plants are safe, pulmonary diseases in Santa Clara have skyrocketed.

“When nature is trampled and exploited, who is affected? It’s the poor. It’s the little people who suffer when the emphasis is on big companies that only care about enriching themselves,” says Brother José Rico OFM Cap, who is a well-known presence in Santa Clara. “They built these plants to power the whole of Batangas, but the people living next to them don’t have access to energy. It’s a great contrast, a contradiction.”

While the Philippines has embraced LNG as a ‘bridge fuel’, there is no clear plan for what will be on the other side. Civil society has stepped into the current vacuum with plans to install solar panels on 10 million rooftops. Franciscans and their allies have also started to exert international pressure to stop the development of new LNG plants by raising the risks at the UN and through shareholder activism, targeting the banks that finance these projects.

“There is still hope that accountability will jump in. There are still places that are pristine,” says Brother José. “There are simple people, with a simple lifestyle that will not destroy the beauty of this place. Maybe in the future, when LNG power is depleted and alternative energy is used, this place can be a model.”

Abigail Martin – “We’re not the worst place in the world, but this is bad.”

Following the Brexit referendum and its promise to ‘take back control’, the United Kingdom led the way in pushing some of the harshest migration policies in Europe. “It was a Conservative Party policy to make our country ‘hostile to refugees’. It’s incredible that they actually used those words, but they were proud of it,” says Abigail Martin, leader of the St Chad Sanctuary in Birmingham. “They faced some backlash and changed the name. But since then, things have just gotten worse.”

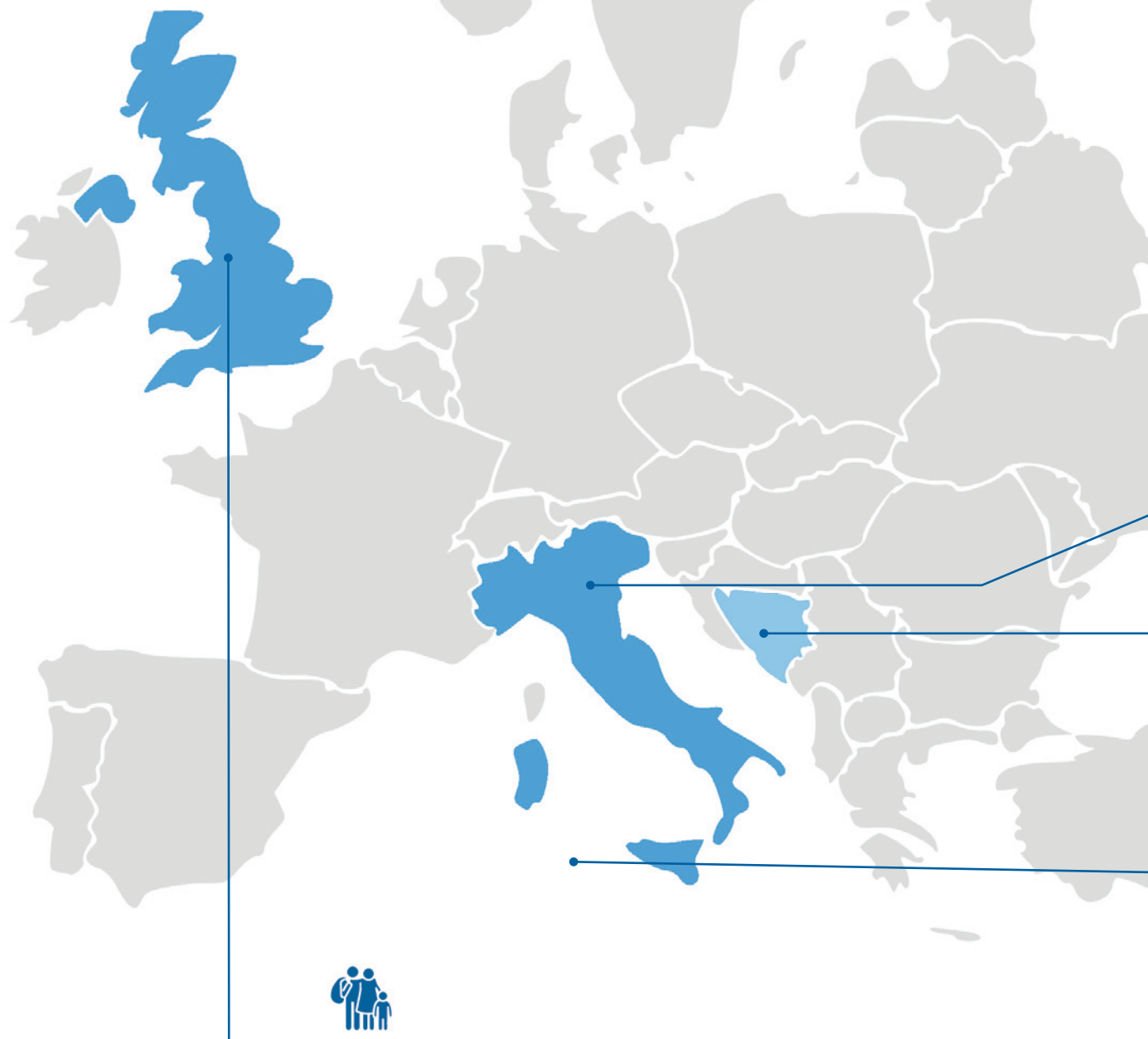


Asylum-seekers in the UK are given just nine pounds a day to live on. While their claims are being processed, they are not allowed to work, attend college, or even study English. Although a final decision about asylum claims was meant to be taken within six months, the immigration system became so dysfunctional that the government simply abandoned that target, putting people in limbo for years. Together with six staffers and a hundred volunteers – including some Franciscan brothers – Abigail welcomed over 2,000 migrants at St Chad’s in 2024, providing basic necessities, English courses, and volunteering opportunities.

Attempts to deter migrants culminated in the so-called Rwanda scheme. Under this plan, asylum seekers would be deported to the small East African nation while their claims were processed. Although deportation flights were repeatedly blocked, sudden waves of arrests caused fear and chaos. The policy violated international and European treaties, as well as a ruling by the UK’s own Supreme Court, but the government persisted. With the help of Franciscans International, Abigail turned to the United Nations, denouncing the policy at the Human Rights Council.

“We’re trying to help people, but we’re just being beaten back all the time. It felt like the government was pressing down on us, but maybe there is someone above them that will listen,” she says. “Everyone at St Chad was lifted by the thought that we might just be able to remind the world that, while we’re not the worst place in the world, this is bad.”

/ Europe program /

*United Kingdom*

Throughout the year, FI denounced several pieces of legislation proposed by the British government that conflicted with the country's own domestic laws and its international human rights obligations. The Legacy Act would have hindered accountability for victims in Northern Ireland by limiting future inquiries and litigation over deaths during the Troubles. Meanwhile, the Migration Act and the Safety of Rwanda Act would have enabled the deportation of asylum seekers to East Africa.

With authorities unresponsive to domestic advocacy, FI invited Abigail Martin from the St. Chad's Sanctuary to speak during the Human Rights Council session in June. Based on her first-hand experience working with migrants and refugees, she conveyed the climate of fear that these proposed policies had already instilled. The new government, elected in July, has committed to repealing the Safety of Rwanda Act.

The Europe program in a nutshell

- Supported 6 local groups in 3 different countries, as well as 1 regional group.
- Hosted 3 partners in Geneva from Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the United Kingdom.
- Conducted 2 country missions in Italy and Morocco.
- Delivered 3 statements during relevant UN sessions.
- Submitted 3 reports to the UN ahead of the Universal Periodic Reviews of Italy and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and on the issue of missing migrants in the Mediterranean.



Italy

In April, FI organized a consultation in Assisi with representatives of Franciscans from different regions to take stock of the human rights issues that Franciscans in Italy were already addressing through their local ministries and explore how these efforts could benefit from advocacy at the UN. In a two-day workshop, the participants identified four such areas, namely the rights of prisoners, access to public health services, the care of Italian forests, and the rights of migrants.



Following this workshop, the Franciscan family in Italy collaborated closely with FI to consolidate the information shared and develop concrete recommendations to address the challenges that had been identified. Their findings were then submitted ahead of Italy's 2025 Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a mechanism through which the human rights records of all UN Member States are routinely examined. In November, FI hosted Sister Charity Nkandu SFMA in Geneva to take part in UPR pre-sessions to share the Franciscan recommendations directly with diplomats and other stakeholders.



Bosnia and Herzegovina



Mediterranean region

United Kingdom
Abigail Martin teaches a course at the St Chad Sanctuary in Birmingham

Italy
Franciscan sisters and brothers in Assisi prepare for Italy's Universal Periodic Review

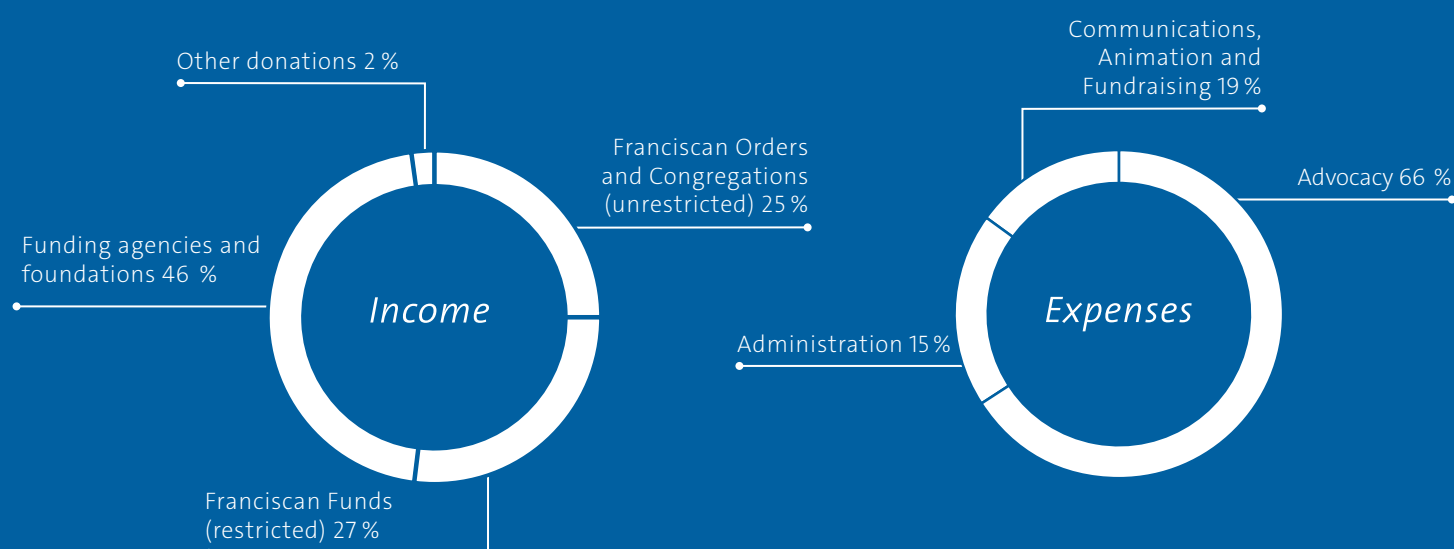
Financial Report 2024

Audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers SA

<i>Income</i>	<i>1.311.577 CHF</i>
Franciscan Orders and Congregations (unrestricted)	323.862
Franciscan Funds (restricted)	349.591
Funding Agencies and Foundations	609.655
Other Donations	28.469

<i>Expenses</i>	<i>1.271.753 CHF</i>
Advocacy	834.296
Communications, Animation and Fundraising	239.828
Administration	197.629

Total non-operating income and expenses	46.318
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Franciscans International is entirely dependent on donations from Franciscan orders, provinces, and congregations, funding agencies and institutions, parishes, and people mindful of Franciscan values of solidarity, peace, social justice, and respect for the environment.

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Donor acknowledgement

Franciscans International wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the Franciscan orders, provinces, congregations, and all individual donors for their invaluable support of this Common Ministry.

We are also grateful to the following funding entities for their generous funding in 2024: Brot für die Welt (Germany), Dreikönigsaktion (Austria), Fastenaktion (Switzerland), Franciscan Missions (United States), Franziskaner Helfen (Germany), Franziskaner Mission (Germany), Miseen Cara (Ireland), Misereor (Germany), Rose Marie Khoo Foundation (Singapore/Switzerland), Sacred Heart Charitable Fund (United States), and Trócaire (Ireland).

Franciscans International Staff

Blair Matheson TSSF

Executive Director

Budi Tjahjono

International Advocacy Director

Cédric Chatelanat

Institutional Development Manager

Cynthia Bringollet

Project Management and
Communications Associate

James Donegan OFMCap

Liaison Officer

Marya Farah

Representative at the United Nations
in New York

Thomas Kleinveld

Communications Officer

Lourdes Briones

Finance Officer

Gyan Kothari

Asia-Pacific Program Coordinator

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Africa Program Coordinator

Olivia Solari Yrigoyen

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Representative of the Secular
Franciscan Order

Christopher John SSF

Representative of the Society of
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Blair Matheson TSSF

Executive Director of
Franciscans International (ex-
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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

Using a rights-based approach, Franciscans International advocates at the United Nations for the protection of human dignity and environmental justice.



Franciscans International
A voice at the United Nations

Geneva

37-39 Rue de Vermont, P.O. Box 104, CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland
+41 22 779 40 10 / geneva@franciscansinternational.org

New York

246 East 46th Street Apt. 1F, New York, NY 10017-2927, United States
+1 (917) 675 10 70 / newyork@franciscansinternational.org

www.franciscansinternational.org

