

Europe Impact Reports

February 2024

Italy – 647908 – International Union of Superiors General (UISG) General Assembly 2023 (\$50,000)

UISG serves 1,900 members directly and thousands of sisters and others through various workshops, conferences, seminars, and events that take place in-person and online. The impact of UISG has grown exponentially over the past ten years and is now seen as an important organization within the Church. The increased visibility of UISG has meant that Catholic Sisters now have a voice and an increasing presence with the Vatican and its various Dicasteries, Commissions, Councils, Task Forces, and working groups.

The Assembly is a significant event in the context of female religious life. It is held every three years and is essential because:

1. It brings Superiors General/Congregational Leaders together from every part of the world
2. It sets directions for the coming three years for the whole of female religious life
3. It builds a sense of Global Sisterhood

At this time of massive change in the Church and the World, leaders must meet so congregations can respond to the needs of the times. It also allows leaders to meet with their peers, exchange information, and seek advice in areas of concern.

During the COVID pandemic, there was no assembly. In 2022, the Executive Committee decided to hold an in-person meeting and offer a virtual option for countries that could not travel to Europe. The committee asked for a grant to assist with the costs of the Ergiffe Palace Hotel - conference hall, breakout rooms, and meals as well as assistance for superiors general from the Global South who need financial assistance to attend.

Impact: 900 (650 in-person, 250 online) sisters and 20 lay collaborators benefited from the project

Sister Patricia Murray shared this story: A Superior General from Germany shared this personal example with me. She had been invited to visit a congregation's house in Ukraine, which housed many refugees. She was hesitant in responding and said to the person in charge, "Do they want me to visit. They have suffered so much during this war, and it must remind them of their suffering under the Germans in the past?" having been reassured, she went on a visit. The people met her with embraces and tears and thanked her for being their Mother and seeking that the sisters take care of them. She said, "My clothes were wet with the tears they shed, and I shed." In their vulnerability, they opened up my vulnerability. I can never be the same kind of leader as before - assured, confident, strong, etc. Now, I can see that we change one another when we share our human conditions and vulnerabilities. I feel that the Assembly helped leaders discover and name their vulnerabilities and opened them to a new way of leading.



October 2022

Spain--556584 – CSD Early Childhood Care Program (Congregation Santo Domingo \$15,000)

The CSD Care Program supports children and adolescents between the ages of 2 and 15. These are children of immigrants who have come to Spain seeking job opportunities to move their families forward. The children suffer from malnutrition and lack of healthcare. The project tasks include diagnosing the infants' pathologies, assessing the nutritional aspects of children and delivering healthy and balanced meals, scheduling vaccination days, and providing hygiene kits and personal clothing to children.

Impact: 110 children benefited from the hygiene kits, food, and medicines.

The sisters were able to purchase the materials and assist the children at the center. The pandemic made this project much more challenging to administer. Some parents' resistance and apathy made this project more difficult to administer.

The monitor noted that "new processes of help and care must be developed because the needs are many, and we must have our best resources to respond to these needs." The monitor also noted that the beneficiaries would not receive the needed food, clothing, and healthcare if this project were not funded.



February 2022

Ireland—506040—Mercy Law Resource Center (Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy \$15,000)

The Traveller Community is an Irish ethnic minority group that lives nomadically, moving from place to place seeking work. Each year an increasing number of the communities' women and children turn to Mercy Law Resource Center (MLRC) with urgent and complex housing issues. The Sisters of Mercy sought funding for two new projects to assist these women and children in accessing the housing list and obtaining suitable short-term accommodations. The MLRC, with its staff of legal professionals, partners with several charitable legal organizations serving these communities, primarily Exchange House, to provide free legal advice on housing and homeless issues. The sisters will also collaborate with Dochas, an all-female prison, to provide structured legal advice on housing matters as these women are released.

Impact: 130 persons served, 250 educated on the virtual platform

This grant helped the Traveller Community and incarcerated women. The program served 65 families from the Travelling Community directly and 200 indirectly; 65 women in Dochas also received direct or indirect services.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and the severe lockdowns in Ireland throughout 2020 and 2021, MLRC saw a significant increase in women calling for advice on their housing and social welfare needs and entitlements due to domestic abuse. MLRC sought to meet this need through the remote provision of direct legal advice and training.

The monitor observes, "If the project did not exist, people would have been left homeless, have lost their homes and ended up in homelessness, or remained living in unsuitable living conditions for extended periods."



October 2021

Belarus—552543—House of Mercy—Missionary Sisters of the Holy Family (MSF) (\$15,000)

After 50 years of communist control, the sisters reopened the House of Mercy in Baranovitchi again in 1994. Since that time, the sisters have fed about 150 to 170 needy persons that come to their monastery each day. Those served include homeless, disabled, and mentally challenged individuals, former prisoners, and the unemployed. In addition to feeding the people, the sisters provide medicines, medical help, clothing, facilities for bathing and washing clothes, and assist with funeral formalities.

Impact: 150 persons served

The sister in charge commented: “The project addressed poverty, hunger, inequality, injustice, abandonment and other forms of social exclusion, illness and loneliness. We helped with basic needs, food, medicines, personal hygiene items, cleaning supplies, and other necessary things...This year due to the restrictions of the pandemic, all meals were served take-out, and we delivered lunches to bedridden people. We paid a lot of attention to supplying the poor with disinfectants.”

The sister continued: “people in need received help necessary for a more dignified life. These people were grateful above all to God for good received. It made them feel less alienated. We have been able to help some of them in the longer term - we supported treatments of alcoholism and lifestyle changes.”



June 2021

Italy—587046—COVID-19 Solidarity Fund—International Union of Superiors General (\$350,000)

In November 2020, Sister Patricia Murray, Executive Secretary of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), appealed to the Hilton Foundation to assist religious congregations and their ministries adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a collaborative effort with the Hilton Foundation, the GHR Foundation, the Raskob Foundation, and several religious congregations, the Fund for Sisters contributed to this international response to the pandemic.

The communities in Italy and Spain used the funds for materials for protection, cleaning, and sanitizing. In some cases, the funds helped cover the funeral costs. In the Amazon, the sisters used the funds for protection and cleaning materials. Still, the greater need was for food and ordinary medical supplies for the people who lost their jobs and could not provide for the family.

Impact: 102 Congregations; 37,009 persons

The grants awarded to congregations have been between \$3,000 - \$6,000 depending on the part of the world concerned and the needs. The number of grants awarded from the fund includes:

- Italy and Spain: 54 congregations benefitting 2,750 sisters supported and 262 laypeople

- Amazon Region: 34 congregations benefitting 28,826 individuals and families
 - Africa: 14 congregations benefitting 5,433 individuals and families
- Total: 102 congregations – averaging \$4,411 per grant

Note: These numbers were from the November 2020 Grant Report. In December, HFS approved an additional \$250,000 for the COVID Solidarity Fund. The grant report filed later this year will include the totals for the additional funding.



February 2020

Belarus—496195—Playzone Installation for the Children of Smarhon—Daughters of Mary Help of Christians FMA

The Sisters of the St. John Bosco community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians restarted their educative pastoral work in Smarhon by helping in parish activities, oratories and various educational activities for children, young people, and adults. “We constructed a new building for 7 [a] social and educational center, and now we are in the process of improving the quality of educational services focusing on extra-scholar activities for the mental, spiritual, and physical growth of children and young people.”

The sisters are dealing with children affected in the third generation by Chernobyl diseases, including leukemia and other solid cancers, as well as the high risk of cardiovascular diseases. The temperatures are too low for the children to play outside for half the year. The sisters asked for upgrades and equipment for their indoor gym, including a theater stage.

Impact: 78 children

The sisters best described the impact of their project: “During the project period we equipped the play zone to assist children at our educational center which contributed to the integral development of children, young people and families in general affected in the third generation by Chernobyl diseases.

We organized sport activities, laboratories, master-classes, theater studio and various celebrations as valid educative offers and opportunities to integral growth of our children at all levels (mental, physical, emotional and spiritual) to help present and future generations to become, as said by our Founder, the St. John Bosco ‘good Christians and responsible citizens’.”



October 2019

UK—499815—Working with the Roma population in Glasgow—Daughters of Charity

“The Space” was set up in 2013 to serve the European Roma migrant community in the Govanhill area of Glasgow. The despised and persecuted ethnic group *Roma*, have fled discrimination in search of a better life. “As we interacted with the families, we experienced the rawness of their poverty, a burden that particularly affects the women. Overcrowding, noise and excessive demands on

sanitation and waste contribute to local tension. Women withstand the worst of this, and many survive by begging on the streets, sometimes searching rubbish bins for anything they can use. Most are illiterate, and many may not even speak the language of their home country but instead only speak 'gypsy.'"

This project is the only one of its type in Glasgow with such intensive support for around 220 families in 2017. The sisters developed three modes of working with the women based on the spoken needs of the women and the sisters' Vincentian values:

- **Community Drop-in Center:** offers a safe place where women receive respect, and form relationships based on trust, honesty, and accountability. Crisis support providing food, clothing, and bedding is available.
- **Community Integration:** enabling women to access healthcare, education for their children, welfare benefits, legal support with housing, and a link to the city council.
- **Building Better Futures:** involving personal growth for wellbeing and personal skills for prospects.

The sisters wished to expand their programs for the women by purchasing computers, developing programs, purchasing program materials, securing tutors and instructors, and securing the services of interpreters to communicate with the women

Impact: 260 women and children

The sisters report: "The grant enabled us to offer families opportunities to engage in literacy and numeracy, wellbeing, exercise sessions, and IT classes. We began with 25 people accessing literacy sessions, and we have ended the year with 158 people attending literacy and 108 participating in the wellbeing programs. Beneficiaries are now actively seeking new learning activities."

The sisters believe that they have achieved three primary objectives:

- Reduced isolation of Roma people as they build relationships within the community drop-in program
- Greater integration of the Roma population in the wider community as they access services
- Enhanced levels of emotional wellbeing amongst the Roma community as they engage in the three streams of activity offered by the project

"Never in our wildest dreams did the staff ever consider they would have heard a Roma woman say...sunt liber (I am liberated)."



June 2019

Lebanon—371078—Assisting Refugees in Dbayeh Camp—Little Sisters of Nazareth

The Little Sisters of Nazareth live in the Dbayeh camp of refugees. Since 1987, they have been ministering to the neediest people, helping the children, the sick and the families in their daily life. The camp residents are primarily Palestinians and Syrians. The environment is very poor and lacks a healthy infrastructure. The houses are very small, crowded and poorly equipped. People are struggling to supply their needs because of the crisis, especially in Syria. The Lebanese government has no capacity to provide any kind of health or social assistance.

Believing in the rights and dignity of the people, the Sisters requested funding to provide food, medicine, electricity and basic supplies to these families.

Impact: 90+ residents of the camp given assistance

The sisters found it difficult responding to our question regarding progress made. Since the political crisis in Syria has become worse, they do not see progress.

They had hoped to reach 50-60 persons and are pleased to report, they have been able to assist 90+ persons. The need however



February 2019

Albania—362905--Support for Students in Economical Difficulties--Angelic Sisters of St. Paul

The sisters opened the Hostel Youth Center in order to respond to the plight of young girls wishing to attend the university. These young women, after completing schooling, have few choices in their villages and are often required to marry men of the clan before reaching maturity. The center welcomes young girls and gives priority to those who come from economically deprived, remote mountain areas as well as those who lack the skills to survive in the city. In addition to providing shelter, the center offers training and educational activities in the fields of health and social behavior. The sisters requested funding for the support of these young women who lack the means to pay for their room and board.

Impact: 60 young women from economically deprived rural areas of Shkodra

The sisters were able to offer housing to 60 young women who would have found it impossible to study at the university. In addition to providing room, board and some educational opportunities, the funding allowed the sisters to offer money to purchase books and provide transportation. The sisters believe that the opportunities given to these girls will allow them to break the cycle of economic poverty in their villages. With their education, some women choose to return to their villages and assist other young girls to have choices in their lives.



September 2018

Romania—384774--Life in Fullness Training--Federation of Religious of Romania

Formation of member congregations is important to the religious of Romania who were separated from mainstream religious and the Church for so many years by the Berlin wall. The President and her council continue to reach out to sisters at various stages of formation and offer them a specialized and consistent formation in theology, spirituality and human psychology. This ensures that the sisters:

- Are prepared to build the Kingdom of God in an ecumenical spirit, with openness toward people of other denominations.
- Are familiar with all the latest developments and teachings within the Church.
- Are prepared to cope with the rapid changes within the Church and society, and find ways of giving a Christian response to the problems and challenges they are facing.

The conference asked for funding to sponsor a residential training program including:

- 120 hours of group therapy and self-development
- 15 hours of individual psychotherapy/counseling
- 75 hours art therapy
- 10 hours music therapy
- 10 hours kinesiotherapy
- 20 hours psycho-educational seminar
- 20 hours volunteer work

After the program, there is a 40-hour follow up program and several short-term formation workshops for sisters.

Impact: 34 sisters received the training

The ten-year program has proven to be very effective for the sisters. Since the number of sisters in Romania is shrinking and congregations find it difficult to free their sisters to participate in a three-month course, the leadership conference must find another way of offering the time of renewal and training for sisters who are at risk of burnout.

