




**Franciscans International**  
A voice at the United Nations



**Franciscans International**  
Annual Report 2021

## *Imprint*

Franciscans International: 37-39 Rue de Vermont, P.O. Box 104, CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland,  
T +41 22 779 40 10, [geneva@franciscansinternational.org](mailto:geneva@franciscansinternational.org)

Design:  **meinhardt** Verlag und Agentur, Friedensstraße 9, 65510 Idstein, Germany,  
T +49 61 26 9 53 63-0, [info@meinhardt.info](mailto:info@meinhardt.info)

Cover photo: © Franciscans International – Brothers Angel Cortez OFM and Clark Berge SSF  
during COP26, the UN Climate Conference in Glasgow

## *Franciscans International Annual Report 2021*

<b>Introduction</b>	
Letter from the President	4
Letter from the Executive Director	5
2021 in numbers	6
About Franciscans International	9
<b>Advocacy in 2021</b>	
Defending human rights in times of Covid-19	10
Historic milestones to protect our common home	13
Indigenous Peoples and the struggle for corporate accountability	18
Promoting peace and human rights	24
<b>Regional Programs</b>	
Africa program	16
Americas program	22
Asia-Pacific program	26
<b>Financial Report</b>	28
<b>Support our work</b>	29
<b>Staff</b>	30
<b>International Board of Directors</b>	31



## */ Letter from the President /*

To an outsider, human rights advocacy at the United Nations may at times look slow and technical, far removed from the everyday of ordinary people. However, when we succeed, there is real and tangible impact. This is the case, for example, with the recent appointment of the new UN Special Rapporteur on climate change and human rights. For nearly a decade, Franciscans have called for the creation of this mandate, which will help to expose the true impacts of climate change on the most marginalized communities and to ensure they are not excluded from future climate action.

This newly appointed independent human rights expert will be able to conduct country visits, meet with affected communities at the grassroots, and record their testimonies – including those of Franciscan brothers and sisters. He will also be able to report his findings and the best practices he encounters to the UN, together with concrete recommendations for change. In doing so, we hope he will help convey a message that is self-evident to most Franciscans: the preservation of our Common Home is not only a moral duty but also a legal obligation as it is essential for our survival and well-being.

This is the last time I address you as President of the International Board of Directors (IBD), as my second and last term comes to an end. As I transition off the board – but not from the life of FI – I leave confident that my successor, Brother Michael Perry OFM, will carry on the torch. I also end my tenure proud that, together with my fellow board members, we were able to foster an atmosphere of trust and cooperation and strengthened the foundations of FI, leaving it ready to meet any challenge in the future.

On behalf of the IBD and the Conference of the Franciscan Family, I express my profound gratitude to all the individuals, orders and congregations, and other organizations for their support and for making our work possible. We also acknowledge the ministry of our sisters and brothers who speak out at the United Nations, often placing themselves at risk in the process. Finally, we express our appreciation to FI's staff for their dedication in representing the Franciscan family at the UN.

Faternally,

**Joseph Rozansky OFM**  
*President of the International Board of Directors*



## */ Letter from the Executive Director /*

Whereas 2020 was a year in which we had to adapt quickly to meet a global crisis, 2021 was a year of perseverance. Neither our sisters and brothers on the ground, nor our staff in Geneva and New York, could escape new lockdowns and other Covid-19 restrictions. Most of the United Nations remained close to in-person participation. Nevertheless, with the lessons of last year in mind, we were able to use different virtual channels to bring Franciscans to UN spaces. Whenever possible, we still visited our brothers and sisters at the grassroots to witness their work, the challenges they face, and work together to bring about positive change.



Although the pandemic is not yet behind us, we are already confronted with the next global crisis: the war in Ukraine now demands our attention, both as an immediate human rights tragedy and because of the long-term consequences on, for example, access to food worldwide. However, while these urgent matters understandably are prominent in the news and in the deliberations of the UN, as Franciscans International we also remain focused on the issues that are so often invisible to the international community.

Across the world, our sisters and brothers live with and support communities on the margins of society. They do so driven by the conviction that, regardless of whether people are displaced, experiencing extreme poverty, or living amid conflict, their dignity and human rights must be respected. Oftentimes, Franciscans are among the few who remain in these difficult situations to offer their support and who are able to bring these cases to the UN in a sustained manner. Amidst the global turmoil, we remain committed that they are not forgotten.

In these difficult times, we continue to be inspired by the examples of Francis and Clare and their dedication to peace, human dignity, and their care for our common home. Let us look for new solutions as we follow in their footsteps. I offer my gratitude to all those who support us in this mission.

Fraternally,

**Markus Heinze OFM**  
*Executive Director*

# / Franciscans International in numbers /

## Influence

## Empower

Over **516**



Franciscan Family members reached in 20 gatherings

**5**



in-country consultations

**13**



Franciscans and other partners advocating at the United Nations

**97**



Franciscans and other partners who benefitted from capacity/strategy building

**22**



(virtual) advocacy events and conferences

**55**



advocacy interventions and submissions at the United Nations

**21**



United Nations outcome documents influenced

**68%**



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



Right to water  
and sanitation

## */ Where we work /*









## */ 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 strategic use of United Nations 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 a number of 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.

## / Advocacy in 2021 /

### *Defending human rights in times of Covid-19*

Throughout the year, the Covid-19 pandemic continued to have a profound and direct impact on the work of Franciscans International and its partners. Although vaccines became widely available in Europe and North America, this was not the case for many of our partners in the Global South. Due to ongoing restrictions, most meetings at the United Nations were held either virtually or in hybrid form, with grassroots representatives unable to travel to Geneva and New York – usually one of the ways we enable Franciscans to directly engage with the UN.

In early 2020, FI already issued several statements warning of the severe and negative impacts of Covid-19 on human rights. In 2021, we continued to receive worrying reports from partners – both on the immediate effects of the pandemic and on the measures implemented to fight its spread. Some governments have used Covid-19 as a pretext to impose further restrictive measures on its citizens and civil society or pushed through controversial projects in the name of

*The UN Human Rights Council  
convenes for a hybrid session*  
© UN Photo



maintaining economic stability. In other instances, blanket measures to curb the spread of the pandemic cut off people from their livelihoods or access to services that are essential for the full enjoyment of human rights, such as education and healthcare. Throughout the world, we've seen existing inequalities magnified or left unaddressed, while the future of Covid recovery remains an open question.

FI raised the concerns shared by Franciscans and other partners at the UN through different channels. Ahead of the annual High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) we submitted a contribution that examined the impacts of the pandemic on the rights to food and healthcare and explored how these dynamics affect efforts to reduce inequality. At the UN Commission on Population and Development, FI raised the specific case of Guatemala, where recurring "states of exceptions" have severely restricted access to food, tripling the cases of child malnutrition. We conveyed similar concerns with diplomats and UN Special Procedures in various reports and during private meetings.

The debates around vaccines and international solidarity have brought new attention to human rights standards at the World Health Organization and other UN fora. Even for States who are reluctant to follow such an approach, Covid-19 and the environmental crises have shown that there is now a high political price for denying the importance of human rights.

*"I feel honored and blessed to give a voice to the voiceless and use the UN mechanisms through Franciscans International to help the people that are directly affected."*

Br. Angel Cortez, OFM









## *Historic milestones to protect our common home*

The effects of the environmental crises that engulf our planet – climate disruption, loss of biodiversity and ecosystems, and waste and pollution – affect all human rights. Following a long tradition, Franciscans have taken a prominent role in calling for environmental justice. At the United Nations, our efforts focus on forging stronger linkages between the environment and human rights and in 2021 the urgency of this work remained clear.

In August, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published its 6th report, issuing another stark warning that we are quickly running out of time to avert multiple irreversible tipping points that will accelerate the climate crisis. In November, world leaders failed to commit to the transformational change that is needed as they gathered in Glasgow for the 26th UN Climate Conference. Nevertheless, important progress was made elsewhere: 2021 was a pivotal moment for Franciscan efforts, with two landmark resolutions adopted by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

On 8 October, the UNHRC voted overwhelmingly to recognize the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a universal human right. While many countries already recognized such a right in their national and regional laws, until this year there was no such recognition at the universal level. Beyond an affirmation of this right internationally, the decision will offer concrete handholds to demand stronger environmental policies.

The decision followed years of sustained advocacy by civil society and faith-based organizations. As part of an international coalition, we consistently raised the concerns and experiences of Franciscans and other partners at the grassroots to illustrate the ineluctable connection between the environment and human rights. In the months leading up to the vote, FI also offered its expertise and facilitated discussions between different stakeholders as the resolution was finalized. However, this work has not ended with the UNHRC vote: our efforts will now focus on an affirmation of the Council's decision by the UN General Assembly in New York and the full operationalization of this right within the UN system.

In a second vote on the same day, the UNHRC also created a new Special Rapporteur on human rights and climate change, a mandate whose establishment FI had called for as early as 2010. Since then, we have consistently raised the importance of this mandate to streamline climate-related work at the UN, analyze and advise on the impacts of climate change, and expose the consequences of climate policies on the rights of people, especially those most marginalized and disadvantaged. FI also offered its expertise to examine what form this new mandate could take, including through a series of regional consultations with over 150 civil society organizations and experts, which was presented in January 2021 in collaboration with the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL).

More generally, FI has used existing avenues at the UN to raise environmental issues and human rights whenever relevant, for example during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Solomon Islands or in our reports on migration dynamics in the Americas. We are also closely watching other UN spaces: for instance, as part of the Security Council Working Group, in which selected NGOs engage directly with the Council's members, FI closely followed attempts to pass a resolution on climate change and security.

*“Logging pollutes the land, sea, bush, river and at the same time it pollutes the relationship between the people. Everything touched by logging gets polluted and possibly leads to conflict.”*

Interviewee for the Solomon Islands UPR

## *Brother Clark: Living action and commitment to protect our planet*

For many attendees, the UN Climate Conference in Glasgow (COP26), was off to a cold and windy start. Brother Clark Berge of the Society of Saint Francis was among the thousands queuing outside in the November rain to take part in the two-week meeting with the delegation of Franciscans International. While waiting in line, he happened to strike up a conversation with diplomats from the Solomon Islands – a place where he was novice tutor and shared life with the brothers of the Society of St. Francis.

“It just brought home for me that for the people I know, climate change is not some idea that is far away. During my last trip there, I visited villages that are now underwater,” says Brother Clark afterwards. “This isn’t theoretical at all.” As Guardian of the Hilfield Friary in Southwest England, he is now part of a community that is putting their convictions into action: through a communal commitment to sustainable living, they have reduced their carbon footprint by 95 percent and turned the surrounding area into a haven for wildlife. During the COP26 he delivered a clear message – change is possible.

Change is also slow. Inside COP26 the FI delegation called for strong climate action, hosting an event in which over 100 Franciscans and other faith-based allies participated online and in-person. FI also took part in the many interfaith demonstrations and gatherings outside the venue. Unfortunately, world leaders did not commit to the real changes needed to avert this crisis in a just way. Nevertheless, Franciscans will continue to defend the planet, both by calling for international action and by providing a lived example. “We need to keep the pressure up so that the politicians understand this is something we all share,” says Brother Clark. “We need to act on it.”

*Brother Clark after the interfaith  
Talanoa dialogue in Glasgow  
together with the Right Reverend  
Olivia Graham, Bishop of Reading  
and leader of the Diocese of  
Oxford's Environment Task Group*  
© Franciscans International







*Sister Leonie shares her insights during a hybrid UN session discussing women's rights*  
© Little Sisters of Saint Francis

## *Sister Leonie: Charity and advocacy go hand in hand in Uganda*

Perched near the source of the Nile in Uganda, the tourist resorts near Jinja town quickly give way to villages where people still live in extreme poverty. It is here that Sister Leonie Kindiki and the Little Sisters of Saint Francis work to support their community. During a seminar on the United Nations, organized by Franciscans International back in 2010, she first realized that she could use the international community to support her struggle.

“Prior to this seminar, the Franciscan family in Uganda carried out a lot of charitable work among the poor and marginalized,” she says. “But, however much we labored, the oppressive structures continued to exist. We were busy with hand-outs, but we neglected the root causes of poverty, injustice, and other related issues.”

In 2021, Sister Leonie met with other members of the Franciscan family to identify the most pressing issues they wanted to raise with the UN. Together with FI, they then worked to document and transform their experiences into a report that was submitted ahead of Uganda’s Universal Periodic Review – a process through which UN Member States examine each other’s human rights record and make recommendations for improvement.

The work does not end here. At the end of the process, Uganda should accept a number of these recommendations. These provide the basis for a framework through which progress can be monitored – and demand action if these commitments are not kept. The Little Sisters now have another tool to call for support and hold their government accountable as they work in their communities. “Change does not come very easily,” say Sister Leonie. “But one must continue speaking out on behalf of the voiceless poor.”

## / Africa program /



### Uganda

In May, we met with the Franciscan family and other Catholic partners ahead of Uganda’s Universal Periodic Review. Using a bottom-up approach they identified human trafficking, gender-based violence, children with disabilities, right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly as priorities to include in an alternative report to the UN, forming several thematic groups to elaborate on each issue. To ensure that the information was accurate, relevant, and inclusive, the group focusing on female genital mutilation conducted research in two remote villages in eastern Uganda. Here, they talked not only to victims, but also to cutters, men, and community leaders from the localities so that their recommendations could be holistic and take into account all the dynamics behind this harmful practice. The work continues to raise these issues with other relevant human rights mechanisms, such as the UN committee examining the rights of women.



### Mozambique

Franciscans, together with the wider Catholic Church, have played an instrumental role in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as it underwent several political transitions in the past years. FI and partners have been particularly attentive to developments in the mining sector, an industry that has fueled human rights violations for decades. In 2020, we delivered statements to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Human Rights Council. We also organized a webinar during the 45th Session of the Council where religious community leaders and other experts from the DRC discussed ongoing problems with the implementation of the 2018 revised Mining Code and what lessons could be learned for similar efforts elsewhere.



Uganda  
© Franciscans International  
Participants during  
a workshop in Kampala

Mozambique  
© Franciscans International  
Franciscan novices in  
Inhambane province

## THE AFRICA PROGRAM IN A NUTSHELL

- Supported 8 Franciscan and other local groups in 4 different countries.
- Facilitated online interventions at the UN from one partner from Cameroon.
- Submitted two reports to the UN on women's rights, access to education, and freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly in Uganda and on discrimination against the Anglophone minority in Cameroon.
- Delivered 2 statements during relevant UN sessions on the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon.
- Organized 1 online side event on child labor in the mining industry in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- Conducted 2 country visits to Uganda and Mozambique, meeting with 80 Franciscans, to build partnerships and start documentation and advocacy together.
- Organized an in-person workshop for 28 members of the Franciscan family in Uganda and their local Catholic partners.



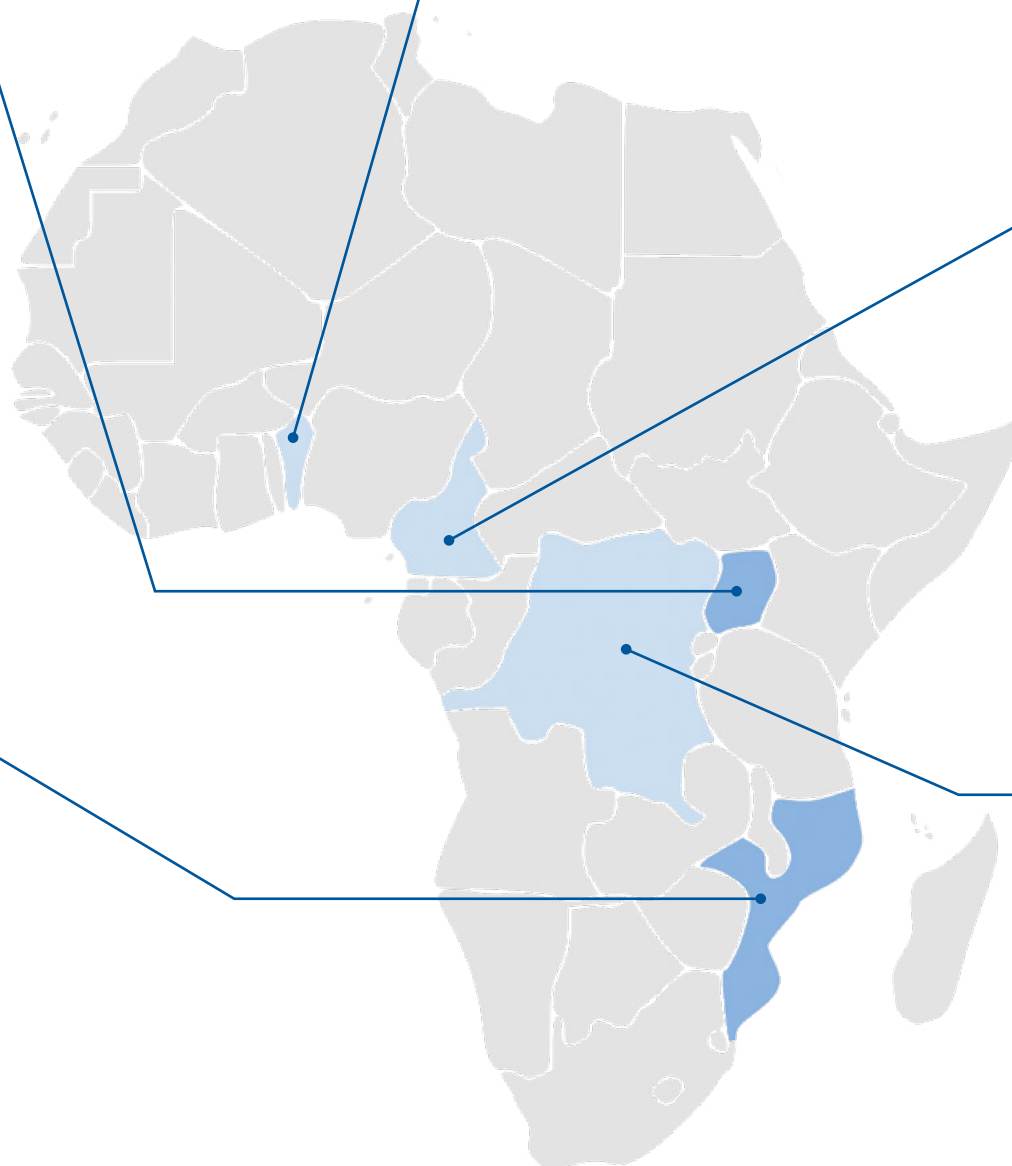
*Benin*



*Cameroon*



*Democratic Republic of the Congo*





## Indigenous peoples and the struggle for corporate accountability

Indigenous peoples are on the frontlines of numerous human rights struggles. Although they only make up around six percent of the global population, Indigenous peoples protect eighty percent of the biodiversity left in the world. Often preserved through traditional practices, these tend to be areas where nature is degrading less rapidly, and which are now considered critical in combatting the environmental crises. At the same time, Indigenous lands across the world are under threat by extractive industries, megaprojects, and large-scale agriculture.

The Covid-19 pandemic too had a deep and disproportionate impact on Indigenous communities. Oftentimes already experiencing marginalization, their situation was exacerbated by restrictions that did not consider their cultural rights and needs, which FI highlighted for instance in submissions to the UN on Guatemala and Brazil. To support the work of Indigenous activists and other human rights defenders, FI published a series of nine factsheets on Indigenous peoples, Covid-19, and human rights, covering various themes and providing both general and specific recommendations. Together, they aim to make people more familiar

A wall with photos of abducted and forcibly disappeared persons in Guatemala City

© Franciscans International



with UN vocabulary and facilitate advocacy work at the national, regional, and international levels. Recognized by the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples as a valuable tool, the factsheets are available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Q'eqchi'.

To highlight the commonalities in the challenges Indigenous peoples face, FI also organized a high-level panel during the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). Here, women human rights defenders from Guatemala, Brazil, Indonesia, and Bangladesh examined justice and accountability in the context of extractive industries. They were joined by UN Assistant-Secretary General Ilze Brands Kehris who highlighted the similarity in challenges shared, regardless of whether the individual cases dealt with mining, agriculture, tourism, or other sectors. She also underscored the role of businesses in human rights abuses, and the need for States to take action to monitor and hold corporations accountable.

On this particular topic, FI submitted several reports throughout the year to the UN exposing the negative impacts of business activities, both on the rights of Indigenous peoples and the wider population. This included a follow-up submission to the Special Rapporteur on toxic wastes in the case of the Mariana and

Brumadinho mining disasters, in which Franciscans have been supporting victims as they fight for reparations. We also raised this issue during our side-event on the margins of the open-ended inter-governmental working group on business and human rights (IGWG).

FI continues to engage with this working group and the ongoing negotiations at the UN to regulate transnational corporations under international law. Following on earlier submissions and consultations, we delivered several statements during the IGWG's 7th session in October, providing comments and analysis of the draft text touching on trans-generational harm, access to justice, and consultations with impacted communities.

Nevertheless, after seven years, the future of the negotiation process itself remains uncertain. Several powerful States which have so far refused to engage constructively in the process are now promoting an alternative weaker framework that would generally make accountability less likely. As part of international civil society coalitions supporting the negotiations, and reflecting Franciscans' concerns worldwide, FI remains committed to the process and will continue to stress the urgent need to regulate business activities under international law.

*"We want to emphasize that these tools have a focus on action, especially because they will help to concretely strengthen capacities, knowledge and leaderships when shared in the territories."*

Jenny Chicaiza, Indigenous fellow, OHCHR Ecuador







*Participants after a workshop in Honduras organized by FI and the Franciscan Network on Migration*  
© Red Franciscana para Migrantes

## *“No one wants to go and leave their children” – Migration dynamics in the Americas*

Every hour, 34 people leave their homes in Northern Central America and embark on a journey to reach the United States. Driven by a multitude of factors, this attempt itself is also fraught with dangers. Along this road, Franciscans try to support and protect migrants by offering direct assistance such as food, medical care, or legal support. They also document the stories of those that pass through their shelters.

“No one wants to go and leave their children, leave their husband, their wife, their family. No one wants to leave,” says a member of the Franciscan Network on Migration in Honduras. “But this laid bare the levels of corruption, the real economic situation that the poorest in the cities are facing, cities are where the atrocious levels of poverty are most apparent, revealing how the neoliberal model fails to provide a solution to the economic crisis”.



In January 2021, Franciscans International and the Franciscan Network on Migration combined the testimonies they gathered with a literature review and information from conversations with other key actors to provide a general overview of new migration trends in the Americas. By providing these different elements, including the impact of Covid-19 restrictions, we were able to distinguish structural problems, point at areas for regional coordination, and offer a valuable insight into areas and experiences that otherwise remain invisible to stakeholders at the United Nations.

The report also formed the basis for several workshops and trainings organized by FI and the Franciscan Network on Migration, including a series of online modules. Combining contributions from both human rights experts, UN advocates, and Franciscans working directly with migrants, they are currently being adapted into a course, which is set to launch in second half of 2022.



# / Americas Program /



Mexico



## Guatemala



There has been an alarming decline of respect for human rights in Guatemala, which has been exacerbated by a series of “states of exception,” ostensibly to curb the spread of Covid-19. The lack of an independent judiciary enables the harassment and criminalization of human rights defenders and the exploitation of natural resources. These trends also disproportionately affect the country’s Indigenous peoples. Franciscans International raised these worrying developments through various submissions and events at the United Nations. In November, our staff also visited Guatemala for a capacity-building workshop with Indigenous representatives and met with Indigenous human rights defender Bernardo Caal Xol, imprisoned for his resistance to hydroelectric projects affecting his community. FI further met Indigenous leaders with local Franciscans in San Juan Sacatepéquez, where the operations of a cement company are affecting the environment.



El Salvador



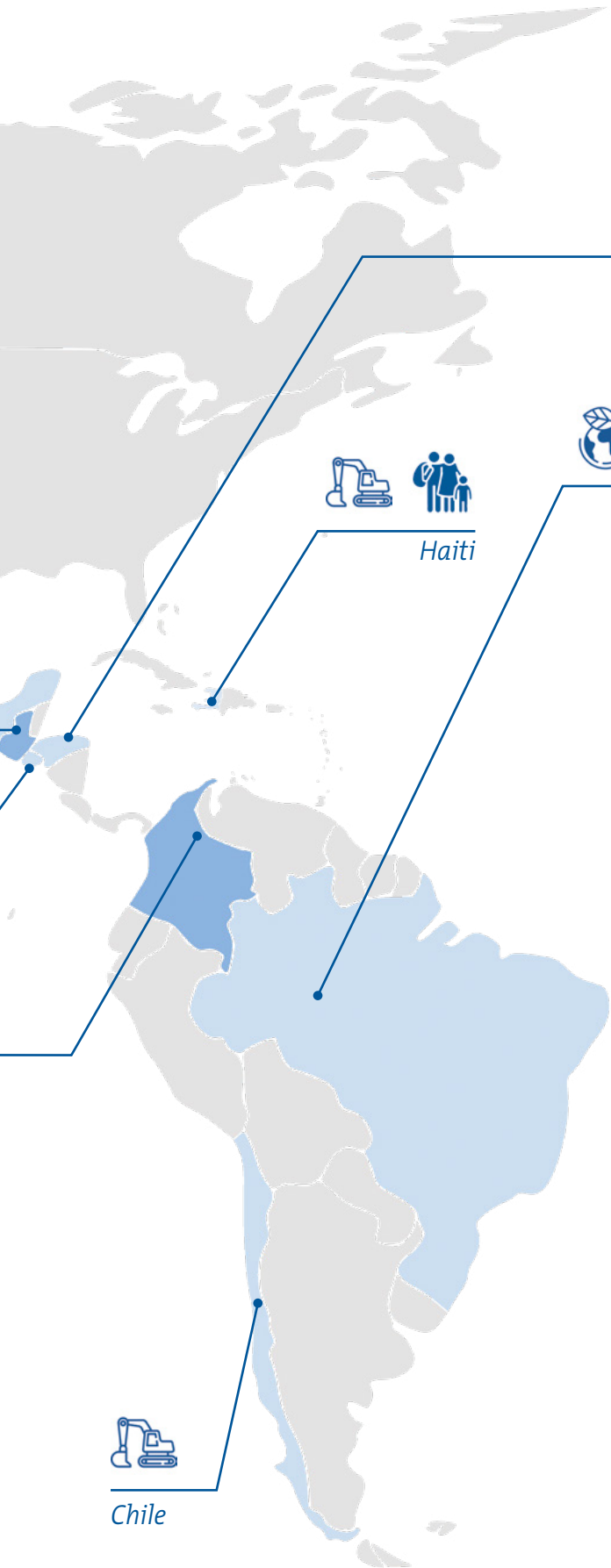
## Colombia



In early 2021, protest erupted throughout the country fueled by poverty, inequality, growing social injustices, impunity, systemic racism, and violence against human rights defenders. Rather than addressing the root causes, authorities responded by using excessive force. At the UN Human Rights Council, Franciscans International mobilized a network of over 300 organizations to call for an investigation by the High Commissioner for Human Rights into these violations, which was subsequently published in December. In October, we also travelled to Bogotá, Cali, and Medellín gather first-hand information and plan future advocacy efforts with the local Franciscan Family. Together, we explored international and national avenues to resist the repeated attempts by mining companies to explore and exploit the soil despite local opposition and adverse impacts on water sources. Increasing migration flows are at the center of Franciscan concerns and we discussed plans to scale up their efforts to better meet the rising needs of migrants and asylum seekers.

Colombia  
© Franciscans International  
FI delegation meets with the Franciscan family of Colombia in Bogotá

Guatemala  
© Franciscans International  
FI delegation meets with Indigenous leaders in Guatemala



### THE AMERICAS PROGRAM IN A NUTSHELL

- Supported 15 Franciscan and other local groups in 8 different countries.
- Hosted 1 representative from Brazil in Geneva and facilitated online interventions of 7 additional partners from Colombia (1), Guatemala (2), El Salvador (2) and Brazil (2).
- Submitted 8 reports to the UN on the adverse impact of business activities and State policies on various groups, including Indigenous peoples, people living in extreme poverty, and migrants.
- Delivered 15 oral statements during relevant UN sessions on these issues.
- Organized 8 online events on the adverse impact of business activities, access to water and sanitation, migration issues in Central America, Mexico, Colombia and the United States as well as threats against human rights defenders and Indigenous peoples in Guatemala.
- Conducted 3 fact-finding and capacity-building missions to Colombia, Guatemala, and Honduras.
- Organized an in-person training for 14 Indigenous representatives in Guatemala, as well as online and in-person capacity-building workshops on migration for 45 members of the Franciscan Network on Migration and its allies.



## Promoting peace and human rights

Defending human rights and promoting peace can mean putting oneself at risk for multiple reasons. It can involve working in a context of violence and conflict. Sometimes, those who speak out against violations become targets themselves. Across the globe, threats against human rights defenders (HRDs) and civil society space have been rising. Franciscans working on human rights issues – who do so in some of the world’s most dangerous places – have not been immune to these threats. In 2021, we helped Franciscans and other grassroots partners to raise their case at the UN, as they reported from situations of conflict, supported victims of excessive use of force, or were targeted because of their work.

In the Americas, Franciscans working with people on the move do so in a context that is increasingly hostile against migrants and those that support them. Operating in a context where governments have responded to migration flows with increased militarization, they are now facing threats from both State and non-State actors.

In 2020, the Philippines was the second deadliest country in the world for HRDs. Franciscans and other faith and church-based groups, who have taken a strong and vocal stand against the so-called “war on drugs” in which over 27,000 people have been killed, also faced harassment and threats. They stand strong and keep using the UN with our help to give visibility to their cause, stimulate international solidarity, and work toward accountability.

In Guatemala, where Franciscans work closely with Indigenous communities opposing unsustainable megaprojects, a weak judiciary and hostile government have fostered the rise in harassment and criminalization of HRDs. Those working on environmental issues, often opposing corporate interests, are particularly at risk. In 2021, at least 358 defenders were killed worldwide. Of that total, nearly 60 percent were land, environment, or Indigenous rights defenders, with Colombia being the world’s deadliest country for environmental defenders.

At the UN, FI has consistently denounced these trends, calling for stronger protections for HRDs including Franciscan sisters and brothers supporting victims of human rights violations. We have also offered a platform to defenders at risk to engage with the UN, raising the visibility of their case and enabling them to use UN protection mechanisms against reprisals.

In parallel with the threats against civil society organizations and HRDs, governments across the world are growing more intolerant of legitimate expressions of public grievances. In Colombia, unaddressed and structural social problems sparked demonstrations across the country in April and May, to which authorities responded with excessive and sometimes lethal force. In West Papua, protests have been repeatedly and violently dispersed, while local communities were displaced due to security operations, without proper access to humanitarian help and to the goods and services to realize their human rights such as food or health. In Uganda, police have used indiscriminate and deadly force against demonstrators after the country’s 2021 presidential elections. In each case, FI has proactively built alliances both on the ground and at the UN to call for and, in the case of Colombia, obtain independent investigations into the alleged violations as a pathway to accountability.

*“I realized that through Franciscans International and the Universal Periodic Review, we could, together with my brothers and sisters, improve social justice and push for change.”*

Sister Leonie Kindiki LSOSF



*A FI workshop for Friars Minor in Mozambique*  
© Franciscans International

Finally, Franciscans are often among those who remain behind in situations of conflict to provide material, psychological and legal support to affected communities. In places where the international community has limited access, this also places them in a unique position to document human rights violations and, through FI, share this information with the United Nations. In 2021, we submitted various reports to UN human rights mechanisms and could engage diplomats based on the information received from partners at the grassroots who work in situations of conflict or violent repression. To ensure that this information is reliable, verified, and can be effectively used at the UN, we also conduct capacity building workshops to further empower those doing this important work. Due to security concerns specific details about the abovementioned reports and workshops have been omitted.



## / Asia-Pacific Program /



Sri Lanka



### *Solomon Islands*

Large scale industrial logging is taking a devastating toll on the Solomon Islands. The extraction of resources is not only causing deforestation, soil pollution and erosion, but the influx of money and workers has also upset the social fabric and traditional practices. Together with the Dominicans and the Society of Saint Francis, we conducted a series of workshops to build the advocacy capacity of local partners, who in turn carried out extensive documentation that was reflected in a submission ahead of the Universal Periodic Review. During its examination, the government accepted seven recommendations related to logging, providing the basis for follow-up consultations to ensure that these commitments are implemented.

## THE ASIA-PACIFIC PROGRAM IN A NUTSHELL

- Supported 14 Franciscan and other local groups in 5 different countries
- Hosted 1 representative from the Philippines in Geneva and facilitated online interventions of 3 additional partners from Indonesia (2) and the Solomon Islands (1);
- Submitted 6 reports to the UN on the rights of women, the situation of internally displaced people, Indigenous peoples, and the adverse impacts of logging and climate change;
- Delivered 9 statements during relevant UN sessions on these issues;
- Participated in the examination of Indonesia by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- Organized 3 online events on accountability for human rights violations in the Philippines and on impunity and shrinking civic space in West Papua;
- Participated in the annual meeting of Franciscans in West Papua, which included a training for 13 people



### The Philippines



### Indonesia / West Papua

Based on their deep historical roots in the region, Franciscans have consistently raised human rights concerns in West Papua, where the international community still has limited access. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the already dire situation further worsened, with increased militarization and crackdowns on public dissent. FI raised a broad range of human rights violations and notably submitted two urgent appeals together with partners related to extra-judicial killings and the humanitarian needs of internally displaced persons, which were echoed by the UN in an official communication. We also seized the opportunity of Indonesia’s review by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to raise various issues affecting Indigenous women in West Papua, notably gender-based violence and access to healthcare in a conflict situation and made recommendations on a way forward. This joint effort led to enhanced collaboration with local, national, and international civil society organizations and to a series of public commitments and discussions involving national human rights bodies in Indonesia.



### Australia

Indonesia  
© JPIC Franciscans Papua  
Indigenous Papuans protest  
peacefully in September 2021

Solomon Islands  
© Society of Saint Francis  
Franciscan brothers visit  
a logging pool in Mankiki



# Financial Report 2021

Reviewed by PricewaterhouseCoopers SA

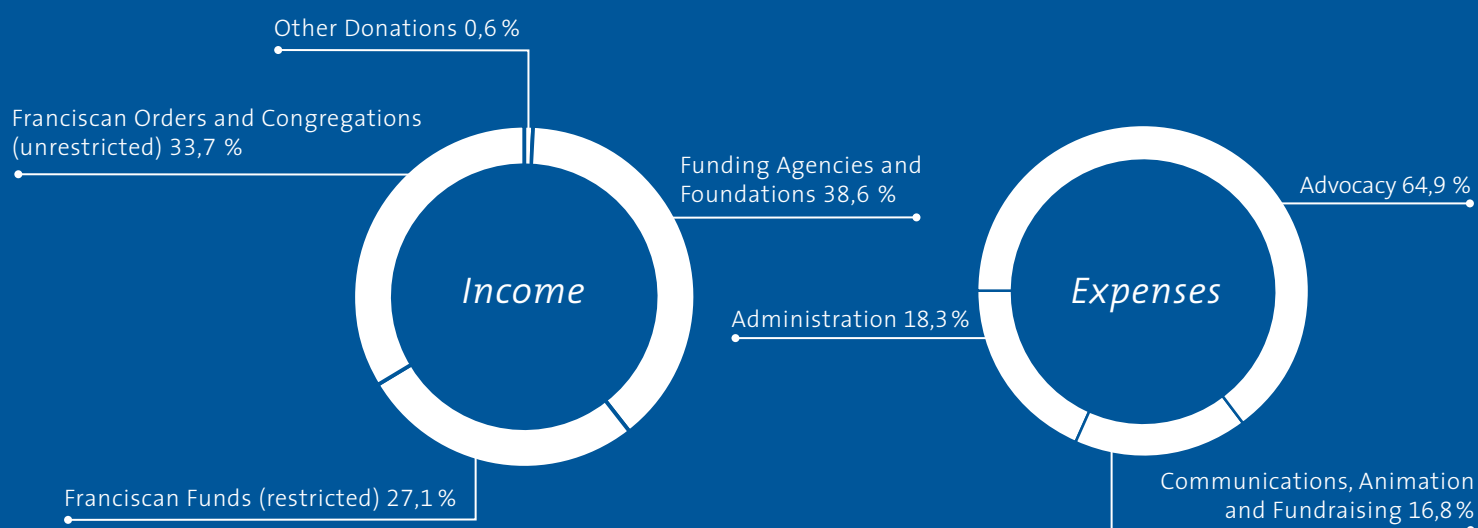
<i>Income</i>	<i>CHF</i>
Franciscan Orders and Congregations (unrestricted)	399'121
Franciscan Funds (restricted)	320'294
Funding Agencies and Foundations	456'716
Other Donations	6'610
<i>Total income</i>	<i>1'182'741</i>

<i>Expenses</i>	<i>CHF</i>
Advocacy	727'005
Communications, Animation and Fundraising	188'620
Administration	205'501
<i>Total operating expenses</i>	<i>1'121'126</i>

Total non-operating income and expenses	-2'429
<i>Result of the year</i>	<i>59'186</i>



## Help us protect human dignity and the environment

Franciscans International is entirely dependent on donations from Franciscan orders and congregations, funding agencies and institutions, parishes, and people sensitive to Franciscan values of solidarity, peace, social justice, and respect for the environment. Make a difference with your donation and help us protect human dignity and the environment.

### Send a bank transfer

Name of account holder: Franciscans International  
Address of account holder: Rue de Vermont 37–39, CH 1202 Geneva  
Bank Name: UBS SA/Address: Route de Florissant 59, CH 1206 Geneva  
SWIFT/BIC: UBSWCHZH80A  
IBAN: CH69 0024 0240 3573 8401 F

If you are sending us a donation from the United States, make a check payable to:  
Franciscans International/246 East 46th Street #1F/NY 10017-2937/New York/United States

Franciscans International is a registered non-profit organization. Donations are tax deductible in Switzerland, the United States, and Germany. For more information on how you can support our work, please contact [director@fiop.org](mailto:director@fiop.org).



© Red Franciscana para Migrantes

## Donor acknowledgement

Franciscans International wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the Franciscan Orders, 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 2021: Brot für die Welt (Germany), Fastenaktion (Switzerland), Franciscan Foundation (United States), Franciscan Missions (United States), Franziskaner Helfen (Germany), Franziskaner Mission (Germany), Miseen Cara (Ireland), Misereor (Germany), Rose Marie Khoo Foundation (Singapore/Switzerland), Trócaire (Ireland).



## *Franciscans International Staff*

*Markus Heinze OFM*

Executive Director

*Sandra Epal-Ratjen*

International Advocacy Director/  
Deputy Executive Director

*Cédric Chatelangat*

Institutional Development  
Manager

*Benedict Ayodi OFM Cap*

Outreach Officer

*Lourdes Briones*

Finance Officer

*Marya Farah*

Representative at the United Nations  
(New York)

*Thomas Kleinveld*

Communications Officer

*Ulises Quero*

Americas Program Coordinator

*Mickaël Repellin*

Africa Program Coordinator

*Budi Tjahjono*

Asia-Pacific Program Coordinator/  
Deputy Advocacy Director

*Hugo Brandam*

Intern

*Julieta Firmat*

Intern

*Massiel Gomez  
Fernandez*

Intern

*Morgan Vitalis Floc'h*

Intern

## *International Board of Directors*

*Joseph Rozansky OFM*

Representative of the Order of  
Friars Minor (President)

*Joseph Blay OFMConv*

Representative of the Order of  
Friars Minor Conventual

*James Donegan OFMCap*

Representative of the Order of  
Friars Minor Capuchin

*José Eduardo Jazo Tarín TOR*

Representative of the Third Order  
Regular of Saint Francis

*Carla Casadei SFP*

Representative of the International  
Franciscan Conference of the Sisters  
and Brothers of the Third Order  
Regular of Saint Francis

*Ruth Marcus OFS*

Representative of the Secular  
Franciscan Order

*Blair Matheson TSSF*

Representative of the Society of  
Saint Francis

*Markus Heinze OFM*

Executive Director of Franciscans  
International(Ex officio)

# *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](mailto:geneva@franciscansinternational.org)

## *New York*

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

[www.franciscansinternational.org](http://www.franciscansinternational.org)



LinkedIn