



Franciscans International
A voice at the United Nations



Franciscans International
Annual Report 2025

Franciscans International Annual Report 2025

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Imprint

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Cover photo and page 5: Franciscans take part in a demonstration during the UN Climate Conference in Belém, Brazil.



/ Message from the President /

Dear Friends,

Peace and all good! It is my pleasure to present Franciscans International's (FI) 2025 annual report. In a turbulent year, our Franciscan commitment to justice, care for creation, and human rights are the values that shape our work at the United Nations (UN). We are responding to urgent, ongoing situations: the impact of dehumanizing deportation flights carrying migrants across the Americas; exploited plantation workers in Sri Lanka; the unmasking of corporations fueling conflict in Mozambique; and the call for environmental accountability in the Philippines.

2025 has been a difficult year, with an increasing lack of dialogue and cooperation among members of the international community to build a more peaceful and just world. As Franciscans, we clearly recognize the parallels between our times and those of Saints Francis and Clare. Walls replace bridges; inequality replaces access; and human environmental damage undermines quality of life for all.

In November, over 20 sisters and brothers from our Franciscan family participated in the UN Climate Conference in Belém, Brazil. We were encouraged by the warm welcome that our Franciscan calls received by many of the over 70,000 participants, especially by the Indigenous and marginalized communities that were represented in Belém. Their message was clear: ordinary people from across the world are fed up with the injustice, inequality, and inaction that afflict our societies.

Global commitment to human rights, protection of the environment, and to an international system based on rule of law and cooperation is under severe threat. The most immediate form this takes is the withdrawal of funding from the UN, as well as from faith-based and civil society organizations. As I write to you, there is growing uncertainty about the future of the UN and its role in amplifying the voice of the suffering and that of the planet. Our Franciscan commitment to the mission of the UN remains unwavering.

If our Franciscan voice at the UN is to remain strong, we need your support: financial, spiritual, and moral. A special thanks to all individuals and Franciscan and Franciscan-hearted organizations who, by their contributions, make it possible for us to continue. We encourage all Franciscans to join with us in this mission of promoting human dignity, peace, and care for the planet.


I wish to thank our sponsors, the Ministers and President of the Conference of the Franciscan Family. I offer a special word of gratitude to all who work tirelessly to defend human dignity and God's creation, sometimes at great personal risk. Your commitment is the cornerstone of our advocacy. Your refusal to yield to injustices serves both a reminder and a source of inspiration to us all. Together, animated by the examples of Saints Francis and Clare, we can build a better future.

Faternally,

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



/ 2025 in Numbers /

550+ 
Franciscan Family members
joined 13 gatherings

11 
in-country consultations

18 
advocacy events and
conferences

117 
Franciscans and other
partners who benefited from
capacity/strategy building

10 
Franciscans and other
partners advocating at the
United Nations

42 
advocacy interventions
and submissions to the
United Nations

77% 
of FI recommendations reflected
in United Nations reports

9 
United Nations outcome
documents influenced

Influence

/ Our focus /


Environmental and
climate justice


Extractive
industries


Freedoms of
assembly and
expression


Human rights
defenders


Indigenous
Peoples


Marginalized
groups


Migration and
displacement


Peace and
reconciliation


Rights to water
and sanitation

/ Where we work /



*Calling
attention*

*Preventing
further violations*

*Building pressure
for change*

/ 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 our 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.



Young Franciscans in the Philippines conduct an interview with fisherfolk communities affected by the Manila Bay Reclamation Project.

/ Advocacy in 2025 /

In 2025 – a year where multilateralism came under increasing pressure – Franciscans International (FI) remained steadfast in working with Franciscan partners around the world to advocate for environmental justice, equal dignity, and peace and reconciliation. Our advocacy took place in a world of deepening crisis, eroding norms, and growing impunity. Yet, the testimonies of those suffering from harmful policies and actions can – and do – resonate in the framework of the United Nations (UN) where they influence decisions and outcomes at the grassroots. Throughout 2025, we kept striving to raise the voices of the marginalized to the powerful, animated by the Franciscan vision of a global community where the dignity of every person is respected, resources are shared equitably, the environment is sustained, and nations and peoples live in peace.

Care for the planet

Franciscans have established a well-known and credible track record, taking a decisive stand for environmental justice at the UN. The widespread impacts of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss on grassroots communities underline that care for creation is not optional – and that these daily realities must shape global policy makers. In 2025, the 800-year anniversary of the Cantic of Creatures and the 10-year anniversary of the Laudato Si' encyclical gave added weight to FI's work at the UN to protect human rights and the environment.

Reflecting this heightened significance, FI supported a 24-member delegation, representing all branches of the Franciscan family, to attend the 30th UN Climate Change Conference (COP30) in Belém, Brazil. We began preparing the ground early, focusing on two key advocacy concerns – Non-Economic Loss and Damage (NELD) and Just Transition. In the lead-up to COP30 in November, FI raised these issues at various UN human rights mechanisms, including in two submissions to the UN Special Rapporteur on climate change highlighting the need for deeper systemic critiques of the energy transition agenda. Simultaneously, we built momentum within the Franciscan family through a series of climate talk webinars and meetings. During COP30 itself, FI launched a new research paper offering faith-based perspectives on Just Transition, participated in several side events and press conferences, and closely monitored the ongoing negotiations.

COP30 President André Aranha Corrêa do Lago receives the manifesto of the Peoples' Summit.



The Franciscan delegation also took part in activities organized by civil society outside the official venue to explore alternative climate solutions. The Talanoa Interfaith Dialogue, co-organized by FI, provided the opportunity to meet representatives from Indigenous, traditional, and marginalized communities, and share best practices towards common strategies. Our delegation participated in the Peoples' Summit, a forum led by popular and social movements that strengthened global solidarity and pushed for more ambitious and equitable climate policies in a manifesto presented to the COP30 President. Franciscans were present in other spaces such as the flotilla bringing activists from across the world to Belém, the Tapiri Interreligious Dialogue linking to marginalized communities, a climate justice march, and celebrations of the 800th anniversary of the Cantic of the Creatures.

More generally, FI continued to support implementation of the right to a healthy environment within the UN framework through statements, consultations and relevant meetings such as the 3rd UN Oceans Conference in June. In submissions to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), FI highlighted links between armed conflict and the exploitation of natural resources, urging that States mandate human rights and environmental due diligence for all business activities, not only those related to natural resource extraction. These references on environmental issues were reflected in General Comment 27 issued by the CESCR in September.

Franciscan delegates in front of FI's official booth in the COP30 Blue Zone.



People on the move

Defending the dignity of migrants and refugees remains a particular concern for Franciscans. In 2025, FI continued its work with the Franciscan Network on Migrants (RFM) to document testimonies from migration routes in the Americas and urge action at the UN toward better protection. We also helped to reinforce civil society networks in the region while responding to new migration dynamics – such as reverse migration flows in response to increasingly hostile policies in the United States – that are heightening the risks to already-vulnerable people on the move. For example, ahead of Panama's Universal Periodic Review (UPR), FI facilitated a joint stakeholders' submission with members of the Observatory of Human Mobility in the Darien and Other Alternative Routes, a coalition of 20 civil society and academic organizations that monitor human rights violations and track migration patterns. Calling attention to the dangers facing migrants crossing the perilous Darién Gap, as well as emerging reverse migration flows, we emphasized the need for a human rights-based approach to migration governance – one of the recommendations subsequently accepted by Panama.

Across the Americas, migrants face ongoing criminalization, gender-based violence, and limited access to justice. FI attended the RFM's annual meeting in Mexico to strengthen the network's ability to raise specific violations and provide the most recent verified information to UN stakeholders. Meanwhile, at the UN, FI continues to create spaces for this advocacy. During the June session of the Human Rights Council, we co-organized the sole event dedicated specifically to the Americas. With our partners, FI facilitated in-country meetings ahead of a visit by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of migrants to the Darién Gap, resulting in strong recommendations to the government of Panama to address issues raised at the grassroots. An online briefing for Permanent Missions enabled local partners – including Franciscans – to share first-hand from their accompaniment work with migrants crossing the continent.

Migrants at a Franciscan Medalla Milagrosa shelter in Panama.



Brother Enrique Barboza Jaramillo OFM checks the supplies of a Franciscan community kitchen for migrants in Monterrey, Mexico.

Displacement is a global concern and FI works to ensure that the experiences of people on the move throughout the world are heard at the UN. In collaboration with the Franciscan Mediterranean Network, we submitted a report to the Special Rapporteur on the rights of migrants regarding missing persons along routes in the Mediterranean region. This was complemented by statistics on migrant disappearances and deaths compiled by our partners. Two young Franciscans briefed members of the Human Rights Council on the lack of measures to address climate induced displacement in Madagascar, following an in-country fact-finding mission organized with the support of FI. Similarly, we raised dire situation of people displaced by conflict in Mozambique and West Papua at various UN human rights mechanisms.

Human dignity and an end to impunity

More broadly, the defence of the inherent dignity of all humans runs through FI's activities at the UN as a common thread. A central concern is to end the impunity that enables and fuels human rights violations. This work includes raising gaps between nominal legislative protections and the reality on the ground, such as the case of overcrowded Italian prisons or the prevalence of female genital mutilation in Uganda. In other instances, it entails denouncing the lack of accountability, for example for extra-judicial killings in the Philippines or the criminalization of human rights defenders in Guatemala.

Corporate activities, especially those of extractive industries, have become a main driver of human rights violations, affecting human dignity and the environment alike. Indigenous Peoples – on the front line of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss – are especially vulnerable, facing land rights violations and forced evictions because of increasing extractivism, including projects ostensibly needed to enable the energy transition. FI raised these concerns at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) as well as in other UN spaces. For example, at the UNPFII an FI side event detailed the impacts of extractive and other projects in West Papua, Indonesia, and reporting in the context of the Mining Working Group raised issues shared by our partners throughout the world.

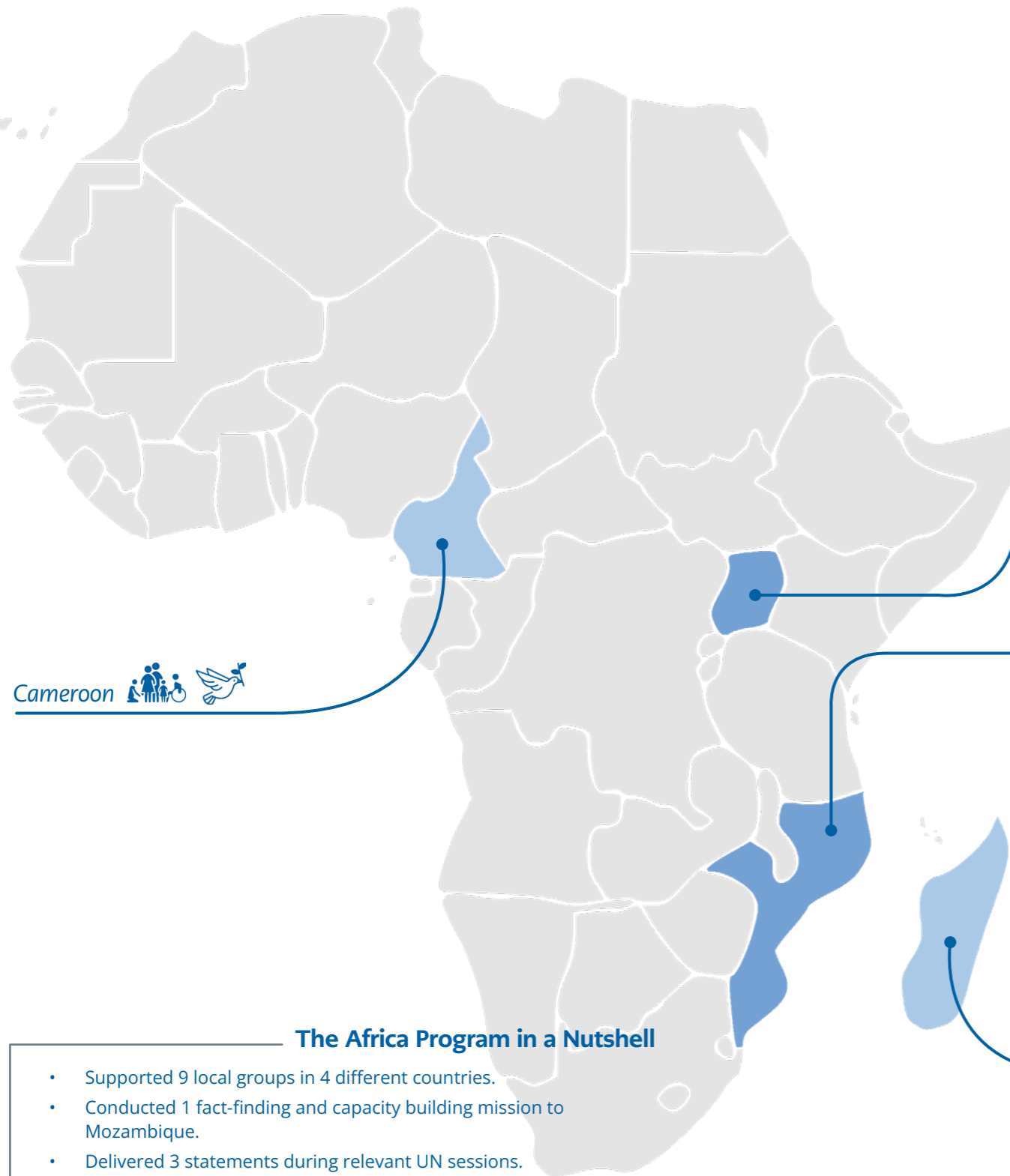
FI has continued to take an active role in the open-ended intergovernmental working group (IGWG) on transnational corporations, a process in which UN Member States are negotiating the text of a new treaty that would regulate business activities under international human rights law. At the 11th Session of the IGWG in October, our activities focused on the urgent need for a UN treaty that reflects the voices and lived realities of women and marginalized communities. Through cooperation with multiple coalitions, our work included statements highlighting areas such as due diligence requirements where stronger alignment across key provisions of the draft text is needed, a call to action signed by faith leaders, and a side event on initiatives to stop impunity and corporate complicity in atrocity crimes. Ahead of the session, FI also provided extensive inputs on a joint publication providing an environmental analysis of the draft treaty.

Corporate accountability remained an important factor in the grassroots work of Franciscans, who continue to reiterate the effect of such violations on their communities. FI conducted fact-finding missions to Guatemala, the Philippines, and Solomon Islands to gather firsthand testimony on the impacts of extractive industries. We hosted partners to share their experiences at the UN, including a partner from Sri Lanka, who highlighted human rights issues faced by tea plantation workers, particularly women, such as unfair wages, limited access to education and healthcare, and increased risk of gender-based violence. Informal exchanges between our partner and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) led to members raising the issue of access to identity documents for plantation workers.



A young boy on the coast of the Verde Island Passage in the Philippines, where fisherfolk communities are threatened by expanding energy infrastructure.

/ Africa Program /



Cameroon 

Uganda 

Despite a legislative framework that nominally provides protection to women and girls, harmful practices including female genital mutilation, early marriages, and teenage pregnancy are rampant in Uganda. During a tense political period ahead of the January 2026 presidential elections, Franciscans continue to support those affected and push authorities to operationalize the laws meant to safeguard them.



In February, Franciscans in Uganda and their local partners participated in a pre-session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to discuss a number of these critical issues. Members of the Committee subsequently asked Uganda to respond to these legal and protection gaps during their official review of the country. Building on previous capacity building efforts, FI also hosted a series of online workshops to prepare a report for Uganda's upcoming Universal Periodic Review in early 2027.

Mozambique 

Mozambique faces a deep and complex human rights crisis, marked by conflict, political instability, and extreme poverty despite its wealth of natural resources. In the northern Cabo Delgado province, socio-economic inequalities, exacerbated by large extractive projects, fuel a violent insurgency. Widespread protests following disputed presidential elections in late 2024 were met with a crackdown by authorities. Among this turmoil, Franciscan sisters and brothers document human rights violations and provide support to internally displaced persons (IDPs) fleeing the violence.



In June, FI visited Mozambique for a workshop with Franciscans and civil society partners in Maputo to prepare a submission ahead of the country's 2026 Universal Periodic Review. As part of this fact-finding mission, the delegation also met with community leaders in Corane, an IDP camp in northern Mozambique. Beyond the UPR, Franciscans relayed their findings to the Special Rapporteur on freedom of assembly and association and raised the situation at the Human Rights Council.

Madagascar 

The Africa Program in a Nutshell

- Supported 9 local groups in 4 different countries.
- Conducted 1 fact-finding and capacity building mission to Mozambique.
- Delivered 3 statements during relevant UN sessions.
- Submitted 2 reports to different UN human rights mechanisms.
- Organized 2 online workshop to prepare for Uganda's Universal Periodic Review.
- Co-organized 1 side event on the linkages between business activities and violent conflict.
- Facilitated the online participation of partners in pre-sessions of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

UGANDA
Sister Leonie Kindiki LSOSF and Nicolas Kugonza OSF meet with FI's Africa Program Coordinator in Kampala, Uganda.

MOZAMBIQUE
Franciscan Missionaries of Mary minister to internally displaced communities in the Corane refugee camp.



Agostinho Matlavelle OFM

“Let me speak [...] because here there is hope”

In northern Mozambique, the province of Cabo Delgado is known for its natural beauty and rich resources. Beneath its soil lie vast reserves of natural gas that promise economic development. Yet for many living there, the reality is marked by violence, displacement, and uncertainty.

“When people hear about Cabo Delgado today, they think immediately of conflict and war,” says Brother Agostinho Matlavelle, a Friar Minor born and raised in Mozambique. “But it is the communities that are suffering.”

Years of insurgent attacks have forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes. Farmers have lost the land that sustained their families for generations, while fisherfolk can no longer access the waters that once provided their livelihoods. Many now live in resettlement sites where resources remain scarce and insecurity persists. Women and children are particularly vulnerable in these conditions, often facing exploitation and violence even in places meant to offer refuge.

At the same time, Cabo Delgado has become the center of large gas extraction projects that promise billions in investment. For local communities, however, these developments have meant forced relocation and the loss of ancestral lands. “The land is sacred,” Brother Agostinho explains. “It is inherited from generation to generation. To tell people to leave because there is a project is very difficult.”

Through his collaboration with FI, Brother Agostinho carried these concerns to the United Nations during the pre-sessions of Mozambique’s Universal Periodic Review. Addressing diplomats and civil society representatives, he shared the message he hears from communities affected by the conflict: they want peace, they want their land, and they want their dignity respected.

Speaking at the UN was a powerful moment for him. “It was like seeing a light at the end of the tunnel,” he recalls. “Let me speak and use these microphones, because here there is hope.”

Carmelina Chocooj Cu

“Our rights are elevated and we are made visible”



In the highlands of Guatemala’s Alta Verapaz, Maya Q’eqchi’ communities face entrenched racial discrimination, violent land evictions, and the systematic exclusion of Indigenous women from decisions that shape their lives. For Carmelina, a community radio broadcaster, organizer, and human rights defender, this is not an abstract struggle. It is the story of her family, her land, and her people.

Growing up as the daughter of campesino catechists who fought for land rights, Carmelina learned early that silence costs lives. At fourteen, she was already broadcasting in Q’eqchi’, reaching women across the region through her program *Nosotras las Mujeres*. The organization she built from those conversations brought together 160 women at its very first meeting. Local landowners took note, and the persecution began.

Today, Carmelina works through the Observatory of Sexual and Reproductive Health, accompanying Indigenous girls under fourteen who are survivors of sexual violence. She ensures they receive emergency care and access to legal protections in their own language.

In November 2025, with the support of Franciscans International, Carmelina travelled to Geneva to represent a coalition of Guatemalan civil society organizations before the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Her testimony echoed a report by this coalition, documenting structural discrimination, the dispossession of Indigenous lands, gender-based violence, and the criminalization of human rights defenders.

“Franciscans International opened first a window, and then a door,” she says. “They gave us the chance to speak in our own voices. Through international cooperation, our rights are elevated and we are made visible.”

/ Americas Program /

Mexico 

El Salvador 

Panama 

Colombia 

Guatemala



Structural and systemic discrimination continues to severely affect Guatemala's Indigenous Peoples, with land and resources as a flashpoint for conflict. In February, FI visited the country for a workshop with Indigenous Maya organizations and allied civil society groups to help prepare the 2025 review by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the drafting of a joint alternative report. The visit successfully reinforced civil society networks ahead of the CERD review. During the session itself in November, which ended with 75 percent of FI's recommendations being reflected in the concluding observations, we hosted two Indigenous representatives in Geneva to share their testimonies and present the alternative report to Committee members, diplomats, and other stakeholders.



The delegation also conducted a fact-finding mission to El Estor, a town at the center of land dispute related to nearby mining activities. FI subsequently raised these challenges during a series of statements and side-events at multiple Human Rights Council sessions.

Brasil 

Colombia is hosting nearly 3 million Venezuelans, who crossed the border fleeing a dire economic situation and political repression. With many making the journey through irregular pathways, migrants often find themselves in situations of legal limbo, unable to access basic services and at risk of exploitation. Following a 2024 country mission to visit three projects of the Franciscan Network for Migrants (RFM), FI hosted its national coordinator during the June session of the Human Rights Council. During his visit, the FNM launched a new publication documenting the challenges of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia and raised these findings in several UN Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies.



Approaching migration through a "culture of encounter" aimed to build networks of mutual aid and support, the FNM in Colombia also organized six local events that brought together Venezuelan migrants with relevant stakeholders. Across these meetings, the participants identified the need to strengthen community leadership and provide more practical guidance on tackling administrative barriers as first steps to improve the situation through local efforts.

The Americas Program in a Nutshell

- Supported 13 local groups in 4 different countries.
- Hosted 3 partners from Colombia and Guatemala at the UN.
- Conducted 2 fact-finding and capacity building missions to Guatemala and Mexico.
- Delivered 8 statements during relevant UN sessions and submitted 2 written statements to the Human Rights Council.
- Submitted 4 reports to different UN human rights mechanisms.
- Organized 6 side events, including on people on the move, the rights of Indigenous communities, and human rights defenders in exile.
- Organized an online briefing and networking meeting with diplomats and civil society stakeholders on challenges facing people on the move.
- Supported the publication of 1 report on the human rights situation of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia.

GUATEMALA
The FI delegation meets with Indigenous communities in El Estor.

COLOMBIA
Fabián Valderrama, national RFM coordinator in Colombia, during a workshop with Venezuelan migrants in the city of Armenia.

/ Asia-Pacific Program /

Myanmar 

Sri Lanka 

The Philippines 

Throughout 2025, FI continued to broaden its advocacy efforts to include not only transitional justice and accountability for extra-judicial killings, but also the right to a healthy environment. In April, we visited communities in the Verde Island Passage and Manila Bay, where large scale energy and infrastructure projects are threatening both the environment and the livelihoods and health of local communities. These issues, and the risks faced by human rights defenders raising them, were raised by two partners taking part in the country's review by the UN Commission on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR).



Franciscans also continue to support the families of victims of extra-judicial killings – estimated by civil society to range between 12,000 and 30,000 – during the so-called 'war on drugs' in their struggle for accountability. In June, Brother Angelito Cortez OFM joined the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression during a side event at the Human Rights Council to elaborate on his ongoing work to end impunity and the subsequent harassment and death-threats he faced, forcing him into a temporary exile.

Solomon Islands 

Communities in the Solomon Islands are facing a growing environmental and human rights crises driven by unsustainable logging and an expanding mining industry. Deforestation is now far exceeding regeneration levels and imported logging equipment introduced invasive species that are further devastating crops. The use of heavy equipment has contaminated water sources while the influx of foreign capital and workers are fueling conflicts over land, social upheaval, and sexual exploitation.



Franciscans first raised these worrying trends during the country's 2021 Universal Periodic Review (UPR), during which the government accepted a number of recommendations to address them. As Solomon Islands prepares to undergo a new cycle, FI visited affected communities on Guadalcanal and Santa Isabel in May to take stock of the implementation of UPR recommendations and the current human rights situation. The mission also provided an opportunity to extend the Franciscan network through meetings with government officials, diplomats, clergy, and faculty members of the Solomon Islands National University.

Indonesia 

The Asia-Pacific Program in a Nutshell

- Supported 22 local groups in 5 different countries.
- Hosted 7 partners from Indonesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka at the UN.
- Conducted 3 fact-finding and capacity building missions to Indonesia, the Philippines, and Solomon Islands.
- Delivered 11 statements during relevant UN sessions and submitted 2 written statements to the Human Rights Council.
- Submitted 4 reports to different UN human rights mechanisms.
- Organized 5 side events, including on freedom of expression, transitional justice, and Indigenous Peoples.

THE PHILIPPINES

FI visits the Santa Clara fisherfolk community where inhabitants are experiencing severe health consequences from a nearby LNG terminal.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

A meeting with communities affected by industrial logging.



RodWan

“If one part suffers, we all suffer”

For RodWan*, an Indigenous human rights defender from West Papua, traveling to Geneva is never just a journey across continents. It is a journey carrying the voices of women and children who cannot leave the forest camps where they now live.

Over the years, RodWan has traveled to Switzerland multiple times to speak at the United Nations about the humanitarian crisis affecting Indigenous Papuans. Armed conflict and military operations have forced thousands from their ancestral lands, pushing families into displacement camps deep in the forest. Access to health care, education, and clean water is scarce, and many women must walk hours each day simply to fetch water or gather food.

In these camps, RodWan spends time listening to women’s stories, documenting their experiences, and praying with them. “Just to have someone come and listen means a lot to them,” she says. Through storytelling circles, women share the trauma of losing their homes, their villages, and, in many cases, family members.

Bringing these testimonies to the international stage is not easy. Advocacy at the UN rarely produces immediate results. RodWan often wonders whether anyone is truly listening. Yet moments of recognition keep her going. During one Human Rights Council session, a UN official publicly mentioned West Papua after hearing her testimony. “In that building,” she recalls, “there is always hope in the midst of chaos.”

With the support of Franciscans International, RodWan has been able to bring the voices of displaced communities directly to diplomats and decision-makers. Her motivation remains deeply rooted in faith. “If one part of the body suffers,” she says, quoting Scripture, “we all suffer together.”

**For security reasons, the name and identifying details of the advocate have been changed.*

Benjamin Milkovic OFM

“Children deserve to grow up with nature”

In Croatia, environmental degradation and migration are quietly reshaping communities. Forests once filled with wildlife are disappearing, while migrants passing through the country often find themselves caught between bureaucracy and indifference.



Brother Benjamin Milkovic OFM knows these changes personally. Growing up in the small village of Brestanovci, he spent his childhood surrounded by woods that seemed endless. “As a child, I remember running freely among the trees,” he recalls. “Today most of that forest is gone.”

Deforestation and illegal waste-burning pits have transformed parts of the landscape, leaving nearby communities exposed to pollution and uncertainty. Families living close to these sites face toxic air and the absence of effective regulation. For Brother Benjamin, environmental degradation is not only an ecological problem, but also a question of justice. “Children are being denied their right to clean air and a safe place to play,” he says.

At the same time, Croatia has become a country of transit for migrants traveling across Europe. Many arrive exhausted and vulnerable, often relying on faith communities for support. In his parish, Brother Benjamin has witnessed the quiet presence of migrants attending Mass, even when they cannot understand the language. “They come with reverence and hope,” he says.

Through the Commissions for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation and with the support of Franciscans International, Brother Benjamin brought these concerns to the United Nations during Croatia’s Universal Periodic Review. Speaking before diplomats and civil society representatives, he highlighted the links between environmental protection, human dignity, and the need for compassionate responses to migration.

For him, advocacy is simply another way of living the Franciscan vocation. “Our response to these challenges reflects our values,” he says. “And I believe we can do better.”

/ Europe Program /

Croatia



Each in their own ways, both environmental degradation and challenges related to migration are threatening human dignity in Croatia. With waste management standards falling behind European standards, illegal dumping is creating health risks for nearby residents and harming the surrounding nature. Meanwhile access to services and legal protections for migrants are falling short of Croatia's international obligations.

Following a country visit in early 2025, FI raised these issues in a submission ahead of the country's Universal Periodic Review. In November, Brother Benjamin Milkovic OFM visited Geneva to take part in the UPR pre-sessions, where he presented a series of recommendations during a civil society panel and in meetings with diplomats and other stakeholders.

Italy



Building on an extensive 2024 workshop in Assisi, Franciscans raised a series of human rights challenges related to their ministry in the country during Italy's Universal Periodic Review. These included prisoners' rights, the treatment of migrants and refugees, and the lack of environmental management in the face of the climate crisis. During the review in January 2025, 75 percent of Franciscan recommendations were reflected in the final report.

Shifting focus to the recommendations accepted by Italy, FI organized another workshop to provide feedback of on the collective work done by Franciscans and identify opportunities to work on the implementation of the UPR outcomes. At the Human Rights Council, FI also reiterated its call on Italy to uphold the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment with regard to forest management – an area where the recommendations of Franciscans were not accepted by the government.

CROATIA
Brother Benjamin Milkovic OFM at the United Nations in Geneva.

ITALY
Franciscans during a FI workshop in Assisi ahead of Italy's Universal Periodic Review.



Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mediterranean region

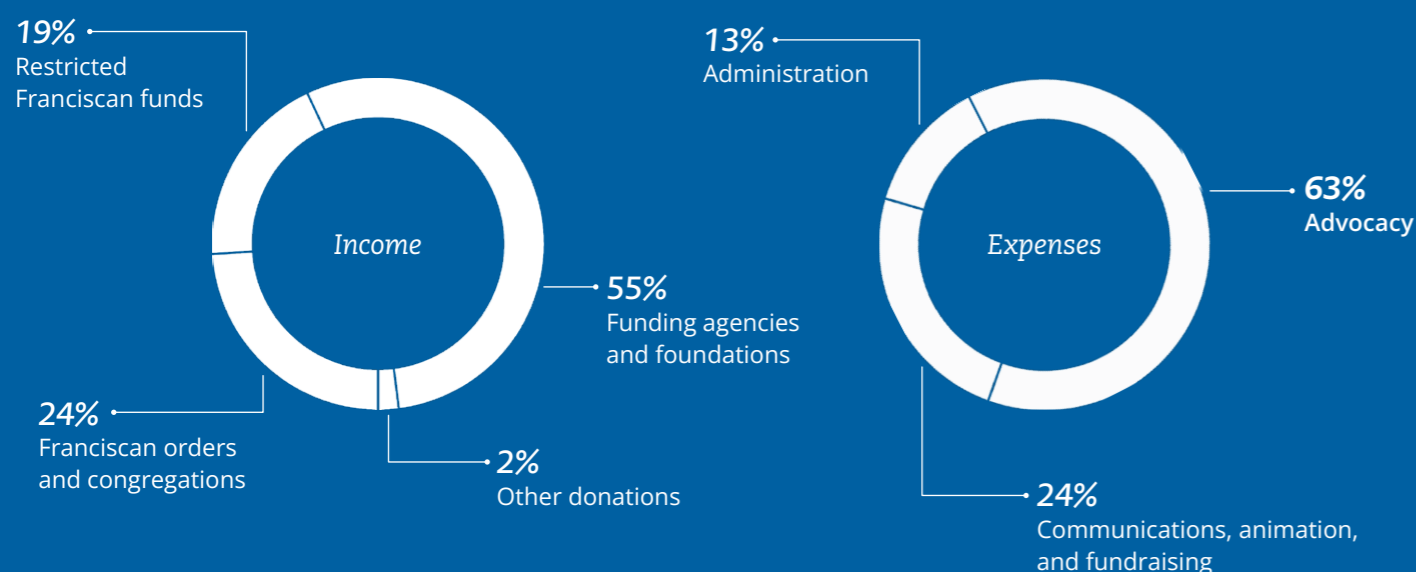
The Europe Program in a Nutshell

- Supported 6 local groups in 3 different countries, as well as 2 regional networks.
- Hosted 1 partner from Croatia at the UN.
- Conducted 2 fact-finding and capacity building missions to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, as well as Slovenia.
- Delivered 3 statements during relevant UN sessions.
- Submitted 2 reports to different UN human rights mechanisms.
- Organized an online workshop to follow up on Italy's Universal Periodic Review.

/ Financial Report 2025 /

Audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers SA

Income		1.184.337 CHF
Franciscan orders and congregations		288.664
Restricted Franciscan funds		218.627
Funding agencies and foundations		649.628
Other donations		27.419
Expenses		1.376.218 CHF
Advocacy		871.673
Communication, animation, and fundraising		329.624
Administration		174.921
Total non-operating income and expenses		-23.321



Help us protect human dignity and the environment

Franciscans International is entirely dependent on donations from Franciscan orders, provinces, and congregations, funding agencies and institutions, parishes, and people who embrace 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.

To donate, you can:

- Go to www.franciscansinternational.org/donate
- 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're in the United States, you can also make a check payable to:
 - Franciscans International
 - 246 East 46th Street Apt. 1F
 - NY 10017-2937, New York
 - United States



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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

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