Promoting a genuine culture of hospitality and solidarity

On the occasion of the Global Ignatian Advocacy Network meeting on Migration that took place in Washington, D.C. from February 3-7, 2020, we want to invite all Jesuits, Jesuit works, and our broader Ignatian family to expand our advocacy efforts on behalf of our migrant brothers and sisters.

First of all, we thank the many among you who have gone a long way already in creating a culture of hospitality by living out Pope Francis’s reminder that, “Throughout the whole world, men and women—migrants—face dangerous journeys to flee violence, to flee from war, to escape from poverty. They experience the indifference, the hostility of the desert, the rivers and the seas.... we can and we must give witness that there is not only hostility and indifference, but that every person is precious to God and loved by him. Hospitality is important. It tells us that those who are weak and vulnerable, those who have little to offer materially but find their wealth in God, can present valuable messages for the good of all. Hospitality belongs to the tradition of Christian communities and families.” (Vatican, January 20, 2020). Above all, hospitality provides us with the opportunity to build a more just society and a more fraternal world.

Through reflection on the different conditions in which the Jesuits and all the Ignatian family operate around the world as well as the cry of the people that we serve, we undertook a process of discernment to identify and prioritize the common elements that define our work. From our contextual analysis, some of the common trends we would like to emphasize are: the increasing vulnerability of migrants in the origin, transit, and receiving countries; the new dynamics of migration such as caravans; the increase in the flows of vulnerable groups, including unaccompanied minors, families and women; the criminalization of migrants and their defendants in several parts of the world; and increasingly restrictive public policies that violate the rights of migrants. In light of this, we have proposed some lines of action that allow us to walk as one body with a common mission across our different Conferences.

The Society of Jesus has long accompanied, served, and advocated on behalf of migrants and refugees. We realize a comprehensive approach is needed to not only optimize the overall benefits of migration, but also address the risks and challenges for individuals and communities in countries of origin, transit, and destination. No one country or organization can address the challenges and opportunities of this global phenomenon on its own.

Our Ignatian tradition, rooted in a lived spirituality, provides a solid reference point to develop a holistic approach where one step leads to the next: accompany, serve, analyze, raise awareness, and advocate. The accompaniment and service we provide on behalf of vulnerable people inform our research and advocacy work. As part of the call within the Society's Universal Apostolic Preferences to walk with marginalized and vulnerable migrants, we must work to reform the social and political systems that lead to injustice. Advocating for just policies is an integral component of living out a faith that does justice.

As GIAN Migration, our aim for the next few years will be to focus on promoting a culture of hospitality worldwide where vulnerable migrants who are forced to flee from their homes are welcomed, promoted, protected, and integrated into our respective societies. “Forcibly displaced people—internally displaced, refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons-, survivors of human trafficking, people in transit and those forcibly returned” are all included in this mission (JCAM Statement on Migration and Refugees. Nairobi, January 23, 2020).

Among its many objectives, GIAN Migration seeks to analyze the reality of migration in the different regions of the world for the purpose of identifying emerging common trends, using research to inform our advocacy efforts, sharing best practices on how to create a culture of hospitality, and promoting advocacy efforts linked to the Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees.