



Sisters
Hospitallers

Newsletter - October 2020

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#Committed

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Fundación Benito Menni Projects 2020 and 2021



The Fundación Benito Menni (FBM), a charitable foundation run by the Sisters Hospitallers, works to support projects presented by the institution's centres in Africa, Asia, and Latin America

At the meeting held in December 2019, the Foundation's Board of Trustees decided which projects would be included in its Action Plan for the current year. In total, it is currently developing over 30 projects in 10 countries.

The projects on which the Foundation is currently working are divided into different areas, but all of them pursue the common aim of treating people holistically, ensuring the beneficiaries can get access to healthcare, especially mental healthcare, and quality education, thereby contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are reflected in the 2030 Agenda promoted by the United Nations.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the projects are being adapted to

ensure the health and safety of the people working on them, as well as the beneficiaries. Some of them are described below, by area of action.

Mobile Mental Health Consultations: "Antennas":

According to the figures provided by our Centres in Africa, mental health consultations are increasing every day in the different countries around the continent where the Sisters Hospitallers are working.

In most cases, patients have difficulty travelling from their home to the referred Mental Health Centre, either for physical reasons, due to long distances, or for economic and social reasons. For this reason, after studying the local and regional situation, projects have been promoted that foster the creation of mobile health teams or "antennas", taking the

mental healthcare provided by the Sisters Hospitallers from our Centres to areas beyond the reach of healthcare facilities to meet the needs of the population.

For example, in Cameroon, support is currently being provided to the Ayos and Ebolowa 'antennas' so that people living far from the urban centre can receive mental healthcare and training. This is possible thanks to the collaboration of Pamplona City Council (Spain). This project includes the regular journeys made by the team from the Yaoundé Hospitaller Centre (Cameroon) to the towns of Ayos and Ebolowa; medical consultations and the delivery of medicines to people with mental illness; follow-ups on treatment in coordination with the nearest facility; as well as raising awareness of mental health issues, mainly aimed at families, related to mental health and illness.

In Togo, they are developing a project entitled "For greater socio-family integration: mental healthcare and awareness in Mango and Cinkassé", with the aim of bringing mental health facilities closer to sectors of the population that could not otherwise be treated, due to the geographical distance between their place of residence and the nearest mental health centres. This project is supported by the Fundación Roviralta.

Rehabilitation of people with mental illness living on the streets

The projects included in this line of action offer mental health care and provide medicines and food to people living on the streets who are suffering from this illness. The first task involves detecting and approaching homeless people, providing assistance so that they can follow mental health treatment, building bridges to foster integration and promoting access to existing community resources. A solar energy project is also being developed at the 'Telema' mental health centre (DRC), thanks to the support of Fundación Eki and África Directo.

Support is also being provided to build a Mental Health Centre in Dapalong, Togo, and for a project entitled "Improving the care of people with marginalised mental illness" at the Divine Mercy Family Home in the Philippines, thanks to the collaboration of the Fundación Hermanos Iraizoz.

Improvement of mental health-care conditions

The initiatives included in this line of activity aim to provide support to health centres and shelters for people with mental illness, so that they can offer a higher level of care. They also work to promote the well-being of patients and improve their mental health. In particular, these projects support the construction of essential infrastructures such as: procuring health equipment and paying for basic services at centres run by the Sisters Hospitallers. In this line of activity, work has begun on a project entitled "Energy to Heal: procurement and installation of solar power at the 'Telema' mental health centre" (DRC), thanks to the support of Fundación Eki and África Directo.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the projects are being adapted to ensure safe conditions.





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Prevention, Psychosocial Rehabilitation, and Re-integration of Persons with Mental illnesses and other Pathologies

The aim of these projects is to provide continuity to the rehabilitation and reintegration of persons suffering from mental illness, through qualified services provided at centres run by the Sisters Hospitallers. The projects are characterised by community intervention to support the sick and their families, psychiatric nursing consultations, home visits, awareness-raising, training, and occupational rehabilitation activities.

The priority goals are to ensure proximity to the local populations and collaboration with local health and social institutions, to raise awareness about caring for and supporting people with mental illness and other pathologies, and to encourage their independence.

This year, through this line of work, we are supporting several projects, including: "For dignified treatment: food and hygiene programme in

Yaoundé prison" (Cameroon), thanks to Banco Sabadell; "Empowerment and autonomy: shelter and rehabilitation of women with mental illness at the Benedict Menni Psychosocial Rehabilitation Center" (India); and "Empowerment and autonomy: shelter and rehabilitation of women with mental illness at the Menni Family Home", thanks to Grupo Norte.

Projects in the area of training and education

The FBM foundation also supports quality education and training, with the objectives of improving people's skills to contribute to their professional integration and ensure that children have a better quality of life and greater opportunities for progress.

To achieve these objectives, the Foundation promotes various development cooperation projects. Training and education projects contribute to the achievement of SDG 4 "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".

One of these projects is entitled "Technology for independence: vocational training for young women", which aims to promote vocational training for a group of young women by purchasing computers that will enable them to continue their studies, in Yaoundé, Cameroon.



Family of Ángel Pérez

Ángel Pérez is a pupil at the special educational needs school run by the Sisters Hospitallers in Granada (Spain).

“Our son is learning and developing in an environment of love, hospitality, affection, joy, hard work, and hope that allows him to grow and live happily”

Ángel Pérez Martínez, who is 8 years old, has been a pupil at the Special Educational Needs School run by the Sisters Hospitallers in Granada, Spain, for 5 years now.

How is the family dealing with Ángel going back to school?

His return to school has sparked all kinds of emotions, all of them positive and hopeful. Especially excitement, we are all really excited!! Excitement because we know how important school is in Ángel's day to day life, as a fundamental part of his personal growth, and a pillar on which his development is based in essential aspects for him such as behaviour, communication, sensory stimulation, and physiotherapy.

We believe that school is a fundamental and necessary part of Ángel's routine, and the ability to get back to his day to day routine is certainly excellent news.

What have all the preventive restrictions and safety measures adopted meant for your son?

Obviously, and being totally honest and objective, the safety measures and restrictions that the school has had to put in place have considerably reduced the movement of people around the school. They have almost erased the essence of coexistence and “contact” that family members and professionals had with the children at pick up and drop off times.

Contact between pupils has had to be significantly limited, which, in our view, was “ano-

ther kind of therapy” for them. Touching, messing around and crossing them in hallways or classrooms was very important for them in their interaction with classmates and teachers.

Hydrotherapy, which has done so much for Ángel and the other children, has had to be cancelled to prevent the spread of the virus, as have other common activities in the playground and other facilities (foam noodles, etc...).

Having said that, the measures taken were absolutely necessary and right for the well-being of our children and their caregivers; as family members, we feel calmer knowing that they are protected and controlled.

At a family level, how does a hospitaller education help you? And specifically in your son's day-to-day life?

At a family level, it is very important for us, as parents, that our children (Ángel, Antonio and Lucas) are educated and develop in a series of values that allow them to be good people, so that in the future they can pass those same values onto their own children.

What can we say about what the institution of the Sisters Hospitallers brings us when the very name already says it all? It gives us the fundamental value of hospitality, 100% devotion to the care and well-being of others, with all the love and care in the world.

From the very first day, we visited the school to have a look around the facilities and decide where we wanted Ángel to develop as a person, we fell in love with the hospitality, closeness, sympathy and empathy with which we were treated that day.

We are convinced that Ángel has a rich grounding, inside and out, in crucial values such as hospitality, affection, humanity, empathy... and he truly understands the effort and dedication that is dedicated to him every day in school. And he passes all that wealth, all that richness on to his parents, and to his brothers, and that is a priceless treasure.

Do you feel safe bringing your son to our school?

Absolutely. As members of the Parents' Association and the school board, at home, we have witnessed first-hand the hard work, management, planning and affection with which the school worked throughout the summer period so that in September, everything was properly in place for the children to return to school safely. We are sure that if this hadn't been the case, the school would have been the first to say that the children shouldn't be put at risk.

We are never going to be protected 100% from such a highly contagious virus, but we are convinced that everything that could be done has been done.

Can children with functional diversity receive a school education remotely?

ABSOLUTELY NOT. These children need direct contact with their therapist and caregiver for their functional, therapeutic, sensory, or physiotherapeutic development. They need to be surrounded by noises, lights, smells, and textures that cannot be perceived if they are not "on the ground" at school.

At the start of the pandemic, during the months of March, April, May and June (even during the summer), WhatsApp bubbles were set up, in which the school managed to maintain the spirit of unity and communication between the school bubbles, but we understand that these children clearly need the smiles, the touch, the gestures and the hugs of their teachers and their classmates and friends to



develop and be happy.

What would a second lockdown mean for your son? We think that would be the worst news. We have seen him suffer a lot in his day to day life over the previous months, and a second lockdown would be even harder. For anyone, forced confinement is hard, but for people with functional diversity it is even more so because they need their therapies, they need their teachers and caregivers for their stability and happiness. Taking them out of their daily routines can cause serious behavioural disorders, sleep disorders, food disorders, self-harm...

What do the values of hospitality bring to your son's education?

That question could be answered simply by looking at our son as we drop him off at school, during any of his activities, or at pick up time. He is a picture of absolute happiness.

As we mentioned earlier, as well as hospitality, as the institution's intrinsic value, Ángel is learning and developing in an environment of love, hospitality, affection, joy, hard work, and hope that allows him to grow and live HAPPILY.

He is completely surrounded by happiness, hope, supporting him through difficulties, allowing him to overcome any difficulty through the key ingredients of smiles and working together. The Sisters Hospitallers have taught us that although life sometimes places challenges and difficulties on your path, everything can be overcome with optimism, joy and affection, values that we try to apply always in our day to day life, and lessons for which we will always be grateful to the institution and all its professionals.

70th anniversary Province of Portugal

The Sagrada Familia Psychopedagogical Rehabilitation Centre (CRPSF), run by the Sisters Hospitallers in Portugal, has celebrated the 70th anniversary of its founding, which took place on 11 September 1950.

To commemorate this special date, a special Thanksgiving Service was held at the Parish Church of Álamos (Funchal - Madeira), presided over by the Bishop of the Diocese of Funchal, Mr Nuno Brás.

The celebration brought together Sisters, co-workers, assisted persons, families, volunteers, regional entities, and local residents. It was a time to give thanks, share, and recognise the work of the Sisters Hospitallers on the island of Madeira.

At the end of the Service, there was also a visit to



an exhibition looking back at the past 70 years of this centre dedicated to Hospitality, entitled "Hospitality, today just as it was yesterday and will always be".

Visitors to this exhibition can travel back in time and see the 70 years of work, dedication, and devotion to the mission of hospitality pursued by this centre.

110 years in Nettuno Province of Italy

The Charisma of the Sisters Hospitallers never ages!

This year, our centre in Nettuno, Italy, has been commemorating its anniversary in a special way, due to the current health crisis affecting us globally.

On 8 July 1910, our first sisters arrived in Nettuno, and since that time they have changed, grown... but never left. 110 years later, the Hospitaller Community continues its legacy and, to celebrate this anniversary, several events have been held over the last few months.

On 8 July, there was a Service held inside the House. Then, on 16 July, in the presence of the Sisters of the House and the Provincial Superior, among others, a brief theatrical performance was staged, representing the history of this foundation, performed by the residents, an educator and a psychologist, who created the costumes, the set, and even a small model of the house that is their home today.



A video, made by the sisters, was also shown, featuring numerous photographs of the centre's most representative sites and places.

The last event took place on the evening of 4 September, at the "Studio 8" theatre in Nettuno, sponsored by the Municipality and the Region of Lazio: "Balcony in music and theatre" was a public, collective charitable event, which showcased just how much our Congregation has meant for the town of Nettuno: a vital resource and beating heart, historically rooted but always current and dynamic.

Day hospitals Province of Latin America

Since last March, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting health and safety measures, La Clínica La Inmaculada, a facility run by the Sisters Hospitallers in Bogotá (Colombia), has been forced to look for alternatives that would enable them to overcome the barriers to mental health generated by this global health crisis.

So, they restructured their services and created the “Day Hospital at Home”, a psychosocial rehabilitation programme, which allows users to continue their recovery plan without leaving their homes.

Every day, users connect to a virtual platform, through which they attend various group workshops and remain active, while reducing the risk of exposure and the spread of Coronavirus.

This experience, too, is bringing great surprises. Through their webcams, professionals have access



to the homes and lifestyles of the users, providing valuable information, useful to their therapy, which would not have been possible in face-to-face meetings. This system also makes it easier for families to get involved.

Our co-workers initially took up this challenge as a temporary strategy, but over time they have seen that online support offers significant opportunities for improvement. For this reason, they are considering maintaining certain elements of this approach even after the end of the pandemic.

Home visits Province of England

The Day Centre run by the Sisters Hospitallers in Dompase, Ghana, takes in 40 children with different types of mental illness every day. Because of the pandemic caused by COVID-19, this centre has been forced to close its doors, following the recommendations of the country's government. For this reason, sisters and co-workers at the centre are visiting children in their homes, in order to follow up and ensure their well-being.

The lack of resources and personal protective equipment makes the work of the sisters and health workers more difficult, but not impossible. They have arranged to make biweekly visits in order to reach patients with the medication they need, and to ensure that they are in good health and well cared for. They also provide food to those most in need.



Alexander Aryeh, a psychiatric nurse at the San Benito Menni Hospital run by the Sisters Hospitallers in Dompase (Ghana), explains that if lockdown is prolonged, the condition of patients could deteriorate, and their rehabilitation could be blown off course. So these home visits, as well as providing medication and ensuring their well-being, help children feel part of a family that never gives up and or abandons them.

Hospitality without Borders Province of France

On 18 July 2020, with the authorisation of the city's mayor, the Sisters Hospitallers working in the community of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso embarked on a new activity, namely to provide mental healthcare to homeless people with no fixed abode in the city. With the aim of practising the charisma of hospitality in Burkinabé territory, they organised their first outing. They visited the outskirts of the city to offer specialised treatments and, above all, humane care to those most in need.

This initiative had a rough beginning because for the first few weeks, people living on the streets with mental illness did not want to be cared for; they were fearful because of the social contempt they had been subjected to previously. However, as the sisters kept returning, those in need of treatment began to understand the situation and, as a result, became more receptive.

In this mission of hospitality, the sisters are



supported by co-workers, members of the Lay Hospitaller movement, as well as the brothers of the Claretian Missionaries Congregation and the Children of Divine Providence.

In order to offer holistic care to these vulnerable and marginalised people, the Sisters Hospitallers working in this area aim to build a mental health centre.

125 years of hospitality Province of Spain

On 24 September 1895, Father Benito Menni took over the "San Baudilio Insane Asylum" as it was known then. Together with the communities of sisters and brothers who supported him, he steered the facility in a new direction, introducing organisational and medical improvements that substantially overhauled the establishment.

With the value of Hospitality at the very heart of their mission, always working to serve those most in need, 125 years have passed since then, but the founding charisma of Benito Menni and the communities that accompanied him remain fully in force today, forming the cornerstone of the present-day Benito Menni Mental Health Care Complex run by the Sisters Hospitallers in Sant Boi (Spain).

This facility is now fully integrated into Catalonia's



public healthcare system and provides care to more than 26,000 people a year from various referral areas. The care complex has more than 700 hospital beds, several day hospitals, outpatient centres specialising in mental health and addiction, community rehabilitation services, assisted living accommodation, mental health halls of residence, pre-work services, specific intervention programmes, and the latest innovations in management and care.



Blanca Hernández

“I have experienced a wonderful calling to belong to this great charismatic family”.

My name is Blanca Hernández, a lay hospitaller from the Province of Spain and a co-worker at the Fundación Purísima Concepción run by the Sisters Hospitallers in Granada. My experience as a lay hospitaller reopened the moment I was invited to be part of Lay Hospitaller Movement in Spain and I took part in my first meetings, at which I was received and welcomed with the utmost respect and affection.

From all the meetings, I have learned things that have allowed me to grow, helped me see and strengthened my conviction to live the shared mission. Feeling the closeness and support of the group helped me to experience my faith, to understand the message of the Gospel much better, and above all to bring the presence of God closer and make it more visible.

The moments of prayer and reflection confirmed to me that we must always be

attentive to see and hear the needs of others, to care for fragile people, to show to them love, to care for them and to serve them.

With the desire and the call of the XXI General Chapter of the Sisters Hospitallers to promote the development of the Lay Hospitaller Movement throughout the Congregation, here in Granada we are getting ready to work, embarking on a journey through which we will rediscover and strengthen our commitment to the Christian faith, of which we are active agents in this movement, sharing the Hospitaller life and mission.

I have experienced the wonderful calling to belong to this great vibrant charismatic family that has always encouraged me to keep in mind that **hospitality makes you more human, sensitive and attentive; where every day, in every gesture, you identify with Jesus, the Good Samaritan. In these daily actions, that is where I**, as a layperson, must commit myself to deliver the message of Jesus, accepting my position and responsibility as an evangelist.

