

## MIGRATION ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND NEW PERSPECTIVES: UISG CONSOLIDATES ITS SISTER-LED NETWORK TO OFFER RESPONSES AND GUIDANCE ON THE PHENOMENON'S GLOBAL CHALLENGES

*The Sister-led dialogue on migration promoted by the UISG initiative Sisters Advocating Globally, in collaboration with the Global Solidarity Fund, was held in Rome on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> of July. Catholic Sisters from all over the world gathered in dialogue with intergovernmental and interreligious institutions, civil society organisations, academic experts and media representatives. This was a day of exchange and discussion on one of the most urgent issues of our time, in order to network and promote inclusive and sustainable solutions.*

Rome, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023 – An international network led by Sisters from all over the world, with the aim of building partnerships and responding to the urgent and complex challenges of our age: this was the focus of the **Sister-led Dialogue on Migration**, which saw UISG Sisters meet with new partners to create a space for dialogue on migration needs and opportunities, according to **Sister Patricia Murray, Executive Secretary of the International Union of Superiors General**. *“These Sister-led Dialogues allow us to put different, cross-cutting experiences and skills on the same table, in order to support vulnerable communities in facing some of the most urgent development challenges of our time, such as those relating to the issue of migration. By sharing different viewpoints and promoting a rich exchange of reflections, through these events we are able to spotlight necessities, requirements and experiences from all over the world, shaping the international development conversation around the needs of local communities.”*

Monday's Sister-led Dialogue on Migration, held at the UISG headquarters in Rome, brought together **Sisters from all over the world, representatives of the United Nations and third-sector organizations, academic experts and communicators.\*** Part of the UISG initiative **Sisters Advocating Globally**, delivered in collaboration with the Global Solidarity Fund, the event represented a valuable moment of encounter. The discussion focused on three key themes: root causes of migration in a global economy; humanitarian assistance and human rights; and finally, integral human development and social cohesion. The day ended with a visit to the project *Chaire Gynai* (from the Greek *Welcome, woman*), which provides shelter and integration opportunities for refugee women with children and for migrant women in vulnerable situations. Originally envisioned by Pope Francis and then embraced by the Scalabrinian Foundation of the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of San Carlo Borromeo, the project is coordinated by Sister Janete Ferreira, member of the Board of Directors of the Scalabrinian Foundation and one of the Sisters involved in UISG's dialogue on migration.

Migration has strongly increased on a global scale over the past decade, as socio-economic inequalities, political imbalances and climate change lead people to leave their countries in search of better living conditions. In 2020, approximately **281 million migrants** were estimated to live in a country other than their homeland, which corresponds to 3.6% of the total global population.<sup>1</sup> According to UNHCR,<sup>2</sup> the number of people displaced by war, violence, persecution and human rights abuses reached a record 110 million at the end of last year – an unprecedented increase of 19 million on the previous year. The statistic is particularly worrying given the tragic issue of migrant shipwrecks,

<sup>1</sup> <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/wmr-2022-interactive/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2022>

which continues to dominate the news to this day – almost ten years on from Pope Francis’ historic visit to Lampedusa on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July 2013, in memory of those shipwrecked in the Mediterranean.

*“Only four months after the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis visited Lampedusa on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July 2013, following a shipwreck that tragically ended hundreds of human lives in the depths of the Mediterranean – recalls **Sister Carmen Elisa Bando, Coordinator of the International Migrants & Refugees Network at UISG.** – Ten years on, that small island continues to rescue and welcome dozens of people every day, representing a beacon of hope for those fleeing atrocious suffering or journeying in search of a better future. This poses questions that cannot and must not leave us indifferent, to which sustainable, replicable answers must be found. In this perspective, our goal is to develop a network among all Sisters, to build broad communication channels and a common path, sharing experiences and testimonies and creating a space for reflection and community. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers bring a profound human experience that they can share with all of us, enriching our lives. To make this possible, we need to free ourselves from prejudice and fear and stand alongside the most vulnerable; only then we will be able to build a world that does not exclude anyone.”*

UISG aims to propose **concrete answers** to this era-defining phenomenon: a **policy brief** containing recommendations from the dialogue will be presented and published in September, shared with Sisters around the world as a working tool, and disseminated to partners as a reference document.

**\*The following people took part in UISG’s Sister-led Dialogue on Migration:**

Sister **Patricia Murray**, Executive Secretary, UISG; Sister **Carmen Elisa Bando**, Coordinator, International Migrants & Refugees Network, UISG; Mrs **Giulia Isabel Cirillo**, Coordinator, Sisters Advocating Globally, UISG; **Sister Nieves Crespo**, Missionary in Ethiopia, Salesian Sisters; **Ahmad Al Rousan**, Cultural Mediator, Medici Senza Frontiere (MSF); **Daniela Fatarella**, Chief Executive Officer, Save the Children Italia; **Patrizio Nissirio**, Senior International News Editor & Coordinator ANSAm/InfoMigrants, ANSA; **Professor Abdessatar Sahbani**, Sociologist, University of Tunis; **Sister Maryanne Loughry**, Core Team member, International Migrants & Refugees Network, UISG; **Flavio Di Giacomo**, Spokesperson, International Organisation for Migration (IOM - UN Migration); **Maria Franca Luna Itriago**, Migration Expert, Spanish Conference of Religious (CONFER); **Valentina Brinis**, Advocacy Officer, Open Arms; **Father Paul Samasumo**, Head of English Africa Service, Vatican News & Vatican Radio, Dicastery for Communication; **Sister Charity Katongo Nkadu**, Assistant Director, Mission Secretariat & Development Office, Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi; **Father Fabio Baggio**, Undersecretary, Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; **Professor Nayla Tabbara**, Co-founder & Director, Adyan Foundation; **Anna Meli**, Vice President, Associazione Carta di Roma; **Sister Maria José Rey Merodio**, Project Lead, Communities of Hospitality, Centro Astalli (Jesuit Refugee Service Italy); **Sister Janete Ferreira**, Board of Directors member, Scalabrinian Foundation; **Tareke Brhane**, President, Comitato 3 ottobre; **Sister Paula Agostinho**, Volunteer, Talitha Kum, UISG; **Hannah Kummer**, Social Worker, Mediterranean Hope, Federation of Evangelical Churches.

**The dialogue was moderated by Luca Attanasio**, journalist and writer.

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**International Union of Superiors General (UISG)**

The International Union of Superiors General (UISG) is a membership organisation representing over 600,000 Catholic Sisters worldwide. Established in 1965 and inspired by the Second Vatican Council, its main objective is to promote deeper collaboration between Catholic women’s congregations. Currently, UISG is composed of 1,903 Superiors General worldwide. Alongside its core mission of training, supporting and connecting members, UISG acts as an umbrella organisation for Sisters engaged in tackling some of the world’s most pressing development challenges. In 2023, UISG is hosting a series of dialogues with representatives of governments, intergovernmental organisations, Vatican institutions, civil society, academia and the press, inviting them to join Catholic Sisters in discussing key issues for the sustainable development of our societies and the protection of vulnerable communities.

To learn more about the **International Union of Superiors General**: <https://www.uisg.org/en/>

To learn more about **Sisters Advocating Globally**: <https://advocacy.uisg.org/>