

PRESS DOSSIER

Fundación Vicente Ferrer

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The Fundación Vicente Ferrer (FVF) is a NGOD (Non Governmental Organization on Development) engaged in the transformation process of one of the poorest and neediest areas in India, Anantapur, as well as the transformation of the more underprivileged communities of the country, *dalits* (untouchable), tribal groups and the so-called *backward castes*.

Its founder, **Vicente Ferrer (1920-2009)**, has been working tirelessly along the most discriminated communities of the region for over 40 years.

The Fundación Vicente Ferrer is a **humanitarian organization** based in a **philosophy of action** which, currently, and after a few decades of hard work in Anantapur, has become a model within the frame of the International Cooperation and has succeeded in awakening the consciences of thousands of people in the fight towards the eradication of extreme poverty.

VICENTE FERRER

Vicente Ferrer was born in Barcelona (Spain) on April 9th, 1920 and his childhood years took place between Barcelona and Gandía. The year 1936 brought the civil war and Vicente (being 16 years old at that time) was required to join the republican army, "La Quinta del Biberón". Once the war was over, he started his Law studies with the firm determination to find the true path towards helping other people.

He felt attracted by the religious organization *Compañía de Jesús* as it gave an image of bravery, wisdom, noble ideals and fight for a better world. Thus he gave up his studies and joined the religious order with the hope to fully achieve his ideology.

His actions bear the first fruits: 1952-1968

On February 13, 1952, Vicente Ferrer reached Mumbai (Bombay) as Jesuit missionary. Although his main purpose was to complete his spiritual training, in his first mission in Manmad he decided to get to know the local people, understand their needs and win their trust, trying to offer a solution to alleviate the suffering of the poorest. To do so, he started an unusual working system among the farmers, trying to awake their consciences and at the same time generating a great solidarity movement. "The miracle of giving" consisted in offering them a little financial support (a small loan) and the necessary technical assessment to obtain water for the crops. If, at the end, each farmer could return the loan (without incurring in any interests), that would spread the "miracle" within the community.

Ever since the beginning, Vicente Ferrer started working on a few projects, such as organizing small cooperatives to dig wells, building water supply channelling systems, creating banks of seeds, little irrigation lands, etc. At the same time, he set up the communitarian services and thanks to the cession

of a few lands he was able to build two schools, a hospital and two residences for student, who by that time amounted already almost a thousand.

Difficult years: 1968-1969

While arousing sympathies among the farmers due to his work, Vicente Ferrer also provoked some suspicions among several of the leaders, who saw him as a threat to their interests. The publication of an article in the *Illustrated Weekly*, a weekly newspaper of large diffusion in India, under the title "The silent revolution", triggered the issue of a deportation order which he received on April 27, 1968, giving him just 30 days to leave the country.

In view of the situation, the farmers initiated a movement in favour of Vicente Ferrer, which was joined by a group of intellectual, politic and religious leaders as well. The coordinator of this defence committee was Madu Metha, one of the more active and influential social leaders in Mumbai. Only two days prior to his deportation, over 30.000 farmers walked the 250 kms of distance between Manmad and Mumbai to appeal for justice to the Government. In a brief interview with Vicente, the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi acknowledged the great value of his work and promised to find the best solution for his situation, issuing a very explicit note: "Father Vicente Ferrer will go abroad for a short holiday and after that he will be welcomed again in India."

Ferrer returned to Spain where he founded *Acción Fraterna en el Mundo*, an organization with a sole objective: to alleviate the condition of two thirds of humanity suffering from starvation. He also took the opportunity to mediate in the legal cause of two goans (natives of Goa), jailed for life in the Lisbon prisons, achieving their freedom two months later.

In those days, the American magazine *Life* published a twelve page report named: "Manmad' Saint", while at the same time a popular movement created in Spain, Italy, Germany, India and North-America collected 25000 signatures with the sole intention of proposing him as candidate of the Peace Nobel Prize.

Despite having requested the visa to return to India, after three months of his departure, the permit had not yet arrived. Intrigued by such delay, **Indira Gandhi** ordered to grant him the visa immediately.

Anantapur: The ultimate adventure: 1969-2009

Upon his return to India, he was only accepted by the estate of Andhra Pradesh, and Ferrer, along with six unconditional volunteers, decided to establish himself in the poorest area of that region, Anantapur, where the water shortage reached almost a desertification degree, and the public health and education systems were practically non-existent. There, the most radical politicians mobilized to "welcome" him with protests and wall paintings, such as: "Ferrer *go back*". But far from feeling

intimidated, he found himself a home within three days of his arrival in Anantapur, a half-built and empty house, which he turned into his headquarters. There was a sign hanging from one of the empty walls saying: "Wait for a miracle". He took such prophetic message as a new incentive to go ahead with his projects, although he never got to know where that sign came from.

In March 1970 he left the Compañía de Jesús, and that same year he married Anne Perry, a British journalist who had been by his side ever since the Manmad conflict. **This was the beginning of the Fundación Vicente Ferrer in India.**

However, during the seventies, the region's authorities persisted in harassing him, distrustfully considering Ferrer's work and even attempting to jail him. By denouncing such harassment, he achieved a favourable Court ruling thus creating a law precedent.

In 1996, he created the **Fundación Vicente Ferrer in Spain** to guarantee the financial continuity of the projects in India. Ever since that moment and up to his death in 2009. Vicente Ferrer has led a project that to this date is still alive thanks to a team of approximately 1900 people and the support of over 140.000 contributors.

A life that does not go unnoticed

Many relevant institutions and entities have honoured Vicente Ferrer granting him, among other recognitions:

- Premio Príncipe de Asturias de la Concordia, 1998.
- Español Universal, 1998.
- Miembro de la Comisión de Erradicación de la Pobreza, del Gobierno de Andhra Pradesh, 2000.
- Creu de Sant Jordi, de la Generalitat de Catalunya, 2000.
- Medalla de Oro de la Ciudad, del Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, 2000.
- Premio Derechos Humanos del Consejo General de la Abogacía Española, 2000.
- Premio Convivencia Ciudad Autónoma de Ceuta, 2000.
- Doctor Honoris Causa, por la Universidad Politécnica de Valencia 2000 y la Universidad de Huelva 2001.
- Personaje destacado de la historia del siglo XX UNESCO, 2001.
- Premio al Espíritu Olímpico, del Comité Olímpico Español, 2002.
- Gran Cruz de la Orden Civil de la Solidaridad, del Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales de España, 2002.
- Premio Quijote Universal, 2007.
- Gran Cruz del Mérito Civil, granted by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009.
- Català de l'Any 2008, 2009.

The Fundación Vicente Ferrer is formed by two groups -one in Spain and another one in India - working together to eradicate poverty and social differences in Anantapur. Thus, Indians and Spaniards become the main players of the financial, social and cultural development happening in that area.

In India, the Foundation works as a social institution, respecting the environment and playing the key roles in a transformation process focused on an ultimate goal: the development of the rural community. The organization does not search for immediate solutions but for **continuity in time**.

A team of over 1.800 people work in Anantapur under the leadership of **Anna Ferrer** and **Moncho Ferrer**, Program Director and Deputy Director of the organization in India respectively.

In Spain, FVF (registered on March 18, 1997 under number 08/0315 of the Foundation's Registry) has its own working methodology with the assistance of a wide network of delegations and representatives. It is run by an engaged, enthusiastic, credible and reliable management. The funds collected in our country assure the continuity of the program in India.

Currently, near **140.000 contributors** finance all projects developed in Anantapur with their donations, thus allowing the more underprivileged and poorer people in that area to have a chance to escape from social marginalization.

Geographical WORKING AREAS

The Foundation works within the Anantapur district, in the Indian estate of Andhra Pradesh, the driest area in India after the Rajasthan desert. Yet, over 80% of its population depends on agriculture.

There is no record of serious incidents or conflicts in Anantapur but merely an extreme and continuous shortage. A specific contribution is not enough when facing difficulties deeply rooted in the social structure itself.



ANANTAPUR DISTRICT

Surface
19.130 km²

Aprox. Population
4 millions

Number of people benefiting from the development program
2,5 millions

BENEFICIARIES: *DALITS*, TRIBAL GROUPS and *BACKWARD CASTES*

In India, society is organized under a rigid cast and under-caste system, in which each of them holds its own determined place within the social structure, with its own rules of conduct and beliefs. It is an ancient hierarchical and perpetual system and although officially the Indian constitution in 1950 forbids any discrimination on grounds of cast, reality is that the change is really slow and differences are still noticeable.

The main part of the Foundation's work focuses on people regarded as "*non-caste*": *dalits* or *untouchables*, whom, historically, have been condemned to the hardest jobs. Our NGO works with the objective to accomplish that all these people, positioned in the lowest part of the social pyramid, have full control of their own fate and be able to obtain decent living conditions.

Ever since 2005, and with the sole purpose to give a major impulse to the Project, the Foundation also includes **tribal groups** and members of the so-called *backward cast* among its beneficiaries, that is unprivileged people suffering a clear situation of marginalization and living under poverty or extreme poverty conditions.

ÁREAS OF INTERVENTION

Initiating a long-term solution change and contributing to eradicate poverty requires a lot of hard work in the following areas:

Health: Implementing a public health-care network.

Housing: Being able to offer a decent home to all families.

Education: Promoting the right to an education.

People with special needs: Favouring their social and labour integration.

Women: Favouring an active participation in their economic and social environment.

Ecology: Creating infrastructures to fight against desertification.

Health: A Public Health-care network for everybody

The public health-care area has the objective to improve the expectations and living conditions of the people of Anantapur, by means of preventing, providing health-care related education and building new infrastructures that can guarantee adequate hygienic conditions.

All projects and activities carried out by the Foundation within this area can be divided among those related to the hospital sector and those linked to the Community Health program.

Health-care Infrastructures

The Foundation has built **14 rural clinics** thus allowing patients to obtain basic treatments in their own areas. The most serious cases are attended for in hospitals serving as reference health-care centres: **three general hospitals, a family planning centre and a centre for HIV/aids patients.**

The HIV/AIDS centre, built during 2006, meant a big step forward in the fight against an illness that is increasing incessantly within the country due to the lack of means and prevention.

The Foundation offers adequate treatment with **antiretroviral**, the only specific treatment to stop the progression of the infection and to prevent the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The centre not only has the appropriate equipment and installations to guarantee the attention and care of the patients, but also offers them the support they need in such difficult circumstances, giving them back their dignity and providing them with the affection that in many cases has been denied to them.

The Nursing School of Bathalapalli was created in 2004 to cover the great demand of health-care personnel in the five hospitals of the Foundation,

Within the frame of the health-care area, FVF also carries out the construction and maintenance of wells and water channels to facilitate the access to drinking water and to reduce infections.

Community health programs

With regard to the community health program, the Foundation has trained local health-care workers and midwives who, together with nurses and rural doctors constitute a very efficient primary assistance network. In addition to that, almost **1.000 health-care volunteers** offer their services all along the rural area. Thanks to their knowledge, there has been a great improvement in the sanitary conditions, especially among pregnant women, and in the treatment of minor diseases.

Malnutrition problems are taken care by means of a specific **nourishment** program addressed to the major risk groups. A vaccination campaign is being carried out among the children population with the help of health-care volunteers.

Housing: A decent home for all families

The Foundation works with communities who due to their lack of economic resources and a permanent situation of social marginality are forced to live in precarious huts, grouped in colonies separated from the upper casts and far away from the public services offered by the local government (wells, latrines, schools, clinics, etc.).

Although the Foundation has already granted a decent house to almost 30.000 families, and even though its activity started in 1994, there is still a lot of work to do in this area. The housing colonies already built provide them with the minimum health conditions required, constituting an efficient shelter against torrential rains and intense heat, and most of all, giving a sense of dignity to this discriminated community.

Education: Yesterday, children without the right to an education. Today: teachers within their community

The fundamental basis of the community's development is the access to an education. The educational program started in 1978 with a campaign to make population aware of the importance to an education and to incentivate families to bring their kids to the scholarship program.

Children of the poorest communities had an additional problem: the lack of prior school tuition provoked adaptation problems and scholar failure, when comparing them to the upper casts' kids. Due to this fact, it was decided to establish a network of **complementary schools** in which the students could receive the basic foundations and necessary support to continue their studies in the governmental schools therefore promoting social integration. All these kids receive school material, uniforms and 700 rupees for their savings on a yearly basis.

In an attempt to balance the literacy rate differences between genders, in 1999 the Foundation created a specific project to support those girls who had discontinued their studies due to family reasons. The **bridge-schools** are residential centres just for girls, where they are trained and prepared to join the regulated education level corresponding to their age.

University Access

Another of the programs carried out by the Foundation within the educational area is the allocation of scholarships enabling University access. Thanks to this project, created in 2004, nearly 400 students have completed their pre-university studies.

The cultural and artistic development is a very important part of the education. The Foundation's cultural program was created with two main objectives: to promote self-confidence of the excluded communities and to increment self-esteem of children coming from those communities or children with special needs.

All these programs: the complementary schools, bridge schools, summer schools, the cultural and scholarship programs are showing some results. Many of the youngsters who have completed their education are actively participating in their communities' development.

People with Special needs: Working towards their social integration

Disability rate is especially high in Anantapur, as a consequence of the difficult living conditions of the rural population.

This, along with the fact that in an economy of survival respect is equal to the capacity of contributing to the family economy, makes necessary to face this situation with specific actions.

The program for people with special needs started in 1987 with the sole purpose to put an end to the discrimination suffered by this collective. To improve their living conditions the Foundation organized **rehabilitation and orthopaedic workshops** to manufacture prosthesis, tricycles and crutches, as well as building **special centres for children with special needs**. These centres have a double purpose: provide them with a complete academic training and prepare them so that they can be independent in their lives.

At present, the Foundation has built specialized residential centres for blind and partially-sighted children, deaf and partially-deaf children and kids with cerebral palsy. **All together, the Foundation covers nearly 1.300 boys and girls.**

At the same time, the Foundation has created an **Association of people with special needs** of mutual support, managed by members themselves. These are the so-called *vikalangula shangams*. In these places, they have the chance to feel as individuals, to feel themselves as part of the community, boosting their abilities and improving their capabilities. They are provided with the right to access to specialized doctors, governmental aids and obtaining orthopaedic material.

Thanks to a Common Fund, they can start their own workshops or any other kind of business and activities that allow them to be self-sufficient and at the same time promoting their social integration.

On the other hand, the Foundation has also a **specific orthopaedic program** offering medical care so that many of the people with special needs can improve their mobility thanks to the efforts of orthopaedics specialists and physiotherapists.

Women: At the beginning, women sat in the last rows. Today they lead demonstrations

The women's development project started in 1982 to try to improve the traditional situation of marginalization suffered by Indian women, who, on the other hand are the basis of the family economy and the main transmitters of values and customs.

To face this problem, the Foundation created a system based in the so-call *shangams* or women associations. With the help of the **Women's Bank**, the Foundations offer the initial financial resources and the necessary assessment so that women can support themselves. By receiving an initial amount of money, *shangams* develop their own credit system, thus offering the group the possibility of benefiting from the advantages derived from the joint savings.

Also and thanks to the *shangams* women can be aware of their rights and recognition in the society.

The Women Development Fund begins once all women in the *shangam* have proven their capacity to manage their own savings. It consists of a loan going from 30.000 to 100.000 rupees. The purpose of this Fund is for them to achieve self-sufficiency by generating and managing their own income. Once they have proved they are capable to do it, then they can join the Woman to Woman project.

Contributions made by the members of FVF in Spain allow these women to save money for a period of 5 years. Once this period is over, they can use the capital and the interests earned in whatever they may think fit (new business, financing the education of their daughters, etc.). Up to now, **nearly 11.000 women have benefited from this program.**

Contrary to what happens in the Women Development Fund, the money received in this program, that is, 10.000 rupees, is not a loan, but actually belongs to them, which means they can start any business activity that may provide them with some extra earnings without having to incur in any debt.

Ecology: Save earth to save man.

The ecology program was the first project that the Foundation developed in Anantapur.

The Anantapur district is the second driest area in India. The scarce rainfall provokes an almost permanent risk of drought. This implies also a devastating impact among the poorest social layers since the 80% of the population depends on agriculture.

When Vicente Ferrer arrived in Anantapur, geologists had foreseen a progressive desertification and warned of a population exodus within the following 50 years. Due to this reason, in 1969 the Fundación Vicente Ferrer started a long-term ecologic development plan comprising several fields:

- ◆ Land's conservation to prevent the risk of erosion and to increase the crops' performance.
- ◆ Creation of irrigation structures (reservoirs, dams, tanks).
- ◆ Reforestation.
- ◆ Excavation of water wells.
- ◆ Use of alternative energy (biogas and solar energy).
- ◆ Family horticulture.

- ◆ Diversification of crops.
- ◆ Implementation of drip and sprinkling irrigation systems.

The *Permanent Fund Against Drought* employs those farmers who cannot work in their own lands during the driest periods. Thus, besides avoiding emigration, the Fund succeeds in improving the land's condition with the small salary paid to the farmers to clean their uncultivated lands.

Every year, farmers coming from many villages are trained by agricultural specialists, acquiring the necessary knowledge such as what is the best crop rotation, how to organize a land for irrigation or how to cultivate and prune the fruit trees.

To avoid a total dependency of agriculture, the Foundation has also potentiated livestock. Therefore distribution of milk-cows supposes an additional source of income for the families.

Active Cooperation: Anantapur Workshops, a commitment with the needy

The name of the Fundacion's support trade project is *Active Cooperation*, a program created with the purpose to fight against the strong discrimination suffered by the dalit disabled women of Anantapur.

The organization encourages another way of being supportive through the *Active Cooperation program*: a fair trade cycle in which the final buyer shows a social, cultural and humane commitment.

During 2001, the Foundation created the firsts residence -workshops addressed to *dalit* disabled women, where they receive training in handicrafts.

In those workshops they can also benefit from basic education, health-care, integration and a fix employment during the whole year.

Currently, over 140 disabled women have joined such a group producing products made of jute and papier mache: hand embroidered items, jewellery and *crocker*y (dinner sets made with pressed palm tree leaves).

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM: FACTS AND FIGURES

- NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTORS IN SPAIN: 139.000 PEOPLE
- NÚMBER OF PROJECT BENEFICIARIES: 2,5 million people
- NÚMBER OF VILLAGES WHERE WE WORK: 2.287

- EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS:

- Schools: 1.696

- Teachers: 2.190
- Primary school students: 64.496
- Secondary school students: 61.003

- ECOLOGY PROGRAM:

- Water preservation structures: 2.291
- Planted trees: 2.749.840
- Number of villages covered by the sprinkling irrigation system: 649
- Number of villages covered by the drip irrigation system: 783
- Number of biogas units installed: 2.585

- HOUSING PROGRAM:

- Number of houses built: 29.442
- Number of houses adapted for people with special needs: 1.620

- HEALTH CARE PROGRAM:

- Hospitals: 3
- Family planning centre: 1
- VIH/AIDS patients attention and care centre: 1

- WOMAN TO WOMAN PROGRAM:

- Number of *shangams* (women association): 4.338
- Women associated to the *shangams*: 60.848
- Villages covered by the Women Development Fund: 978
- Women benefiting from the "Woman to Woman" program: 10.719

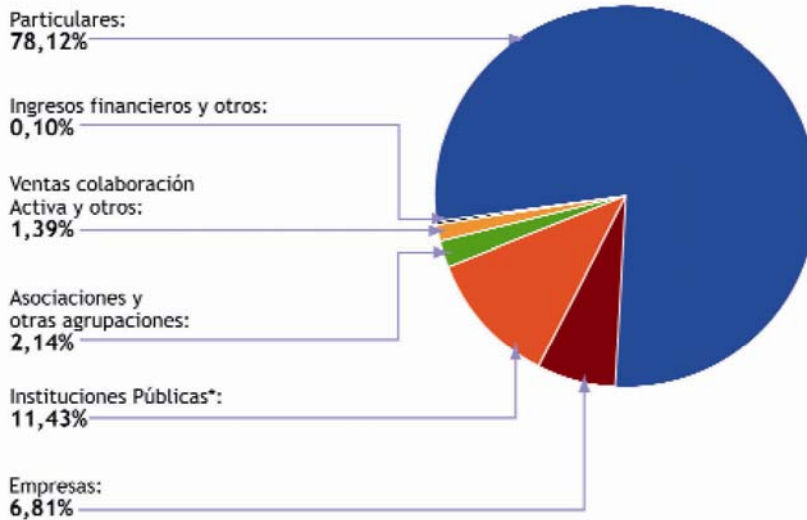
- PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAM:

- Number of *shangams* (associations): 1.263
- People with special needs affiliated to the *shangams*: 16.200
- Residential schools: 18
- Residential school students: 1.288

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

• **Origen de los recursos 2007**

TOTAL: 39.795.188,60 euros



* Recursos procedentes de instituciones públicas para proyectos finalizados durante el ejercicio 2007. Además, se han recibido 3.250.301,06 € para proyectos que se encuentran en fase de ejecución a cierre de ejercicio y que se reconocerán como ingreso a medida que estos proyectos finalicen.

• **Destino de los recursos 2007**

TOTAL: 39.795.188,60 euros



WAYS TO COOPERATE

Sponsorship

With this donation, the sponsor has the opportunity to know the real value of his/her contribution by monitoring the life of a child and his family, bringing closer Anantapur and Spain. Indian and Spanish families are united by the same commitment and same hope.

Sponsoring means contributing to the development of a whole community, as the requested 18€ monthly contribution is granted not only to the child but also to improve the living conditions of the whole community.

FVF Sponsors (2009): 121.066

Sponsored children (2009): 135.238

Contributor member

A member joins the integral development program that the Foundation carries out in Anantapur, joining his/her effort to the area's rural population. Becoming a member is an active way to participate and being part of a team working hard to eradicate extreme poverty and discrimination.

A member can choose between two options: to contribute to a general fund for the whole of projects, or to assign his/her donation to a specific area (education, health-care, woman, ecology, people with special needs or housing).

A member can decide the amount and recurrence of his/her donations. As contributor of the FVF, he/she receives information about the program's evolution and the benefits entailing the whole population.

FVF Contributor members (2009): 26.483

Woman to Woman

Woman to Woman focuses on strengthening ties between Spanish people and Indian women. By means of such project, a group of people in Spain gets to know a group of women in India. Each person is assigned to an Indian woman, through a five-year period monthly contribution of 9€.

Any person participating in this project as a contributor will receive a photograph of the group of women to whom he/she is linked with and a yearly letter containing all the information related to the activity carried out by these women.

Number of people participating in the Woman to Woman project (2009): 7.812

Number of Indian woman participating in the Woman to Woman Project (2009): 10.397

Financing or co-financing specific projects

Another way to help chosen by individuals, public administration, entities and companies is to assign a specific donation to finance a particular Project.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Annual Report Fundación Vicente Ferrer 2007

<http://www.fundacionvicenteferrer.org/esp/home.php?s=35>

Magazine Anantapur

<http://www.fundacionvicenteferrer.org/esp/home.php?s=34>

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