

F I M A R C

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RURAL ADULT CATHOLIC MOVEMENTS

VOICE OF THE RURAL WORLD



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It highlights the rural world's life and activities of
the member movements belonging or not to the Federation

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Dear Readers of VMR

Greetings from International Secretariat

This special edition of VMR is dedicated on the occasion of the important commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements (FIMARC). I am pleased to convey my warm greeting to all of you who contributed in one way or another to build this great movement of catholic farmers and rural people. Founded in 1964, FIMARC (International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements) has been an aspiration of farmers and rural people.

Today I invite you all to celebrate.

Let's celebrate FIMARC. Let's celebrate 50 years of work in the rural communities and among the farmers. Let's celebrate half a century of strivings to show that a different pathway to human development is possible and worth taking. Today we also begin to write a new story – our next 50 years of perhaps even a more challenging journey.

Thank God and thanks to all the members and activists for FIMARC has lasted this long. Not so many organizations would have been so privileged. I've seen some give up early in the game or succumb at some point to development fatigue for a struggle that seems endless.

As we embark on 50 years we reaffirm our commitment to rural people and farmers by acknowledging members who have made invaluable contributions to the movement over the years. Without involved members who have shown commitment and passion for what they do, FIMARC would not be where it is.

For FIMARC, our members and leaders have always been the foundation to our success and over the years many have contributed in ways to help grow the movement

I pay tribute to the generations of FIMARC leaders and members who found common cause with the rural people, fought and created a new life with the small and landless farmers, the small fishers, the indigenous peoples, the protectors of our common property heritage.

So many people and deeds to remember, so many people and deeds to account for and to thank for what and where FIMARC stands today

FIMARC movement highly value the building of people's movements and actions, especially at the grassroots, in making democracy and development. The FIMARC movements have been federating and forming coalitions to leverage their voice and influence in decision-making and public policy.

In step with the times, FIMARC had introduced new ways of doing development. We have broadened our actions, education, awareness and campaigns on Food Sovereignty, Solidarity economies, Human rights, livelihoods, and environment etc. during the course of the past 50 years. We have been trying out new modes of governance on right to food, to restore damaged ecosystems and enable communities to have a greater say in creating livelihoods. Our members have engaged in many areas where people's issues were debated and decided. FIMARC have heightened the profile and visibility of voices locally and internationally. I must say here that we are not afraid to err on the side of daring and learning or to answer for the consequences of our action. We have learned our lessons well through our own deep reflections and self-criticisms. Indeed development is such a difficult and complex process that cannot be taken for granted.

That is our past, as briefly as I could sum it up. Here we are now, looking to a new future. For this part, I invite you to look hard at what is before us. When our founders and pioneers started, they had to face widespread ignorance, poverty, disease, bad governance, civic inertia. In their time, neither democracy nor development was inclusive enough to give everyone a dignified place on the table.

Sad to say, the problems addressed by our predecessors in 1964 were still the same problems confronting succeeding generations at 50 years later. The only

difference though, is that those same problems had gone worse and new ones have emerged and made the situation much more complicated. It is hard to be optimistic when you see that most key indicators are pointing downwards. Except in a few rare cases, poverty overall has grown and deepened, the inequality gap has widened even more. Loss of biodiversity continues. Our climate system is heating

We would not have gone this far without our partners and donors. At the local level we have the community and people's organizations, the local governments, among others. At the national level, we have our allies and friends in the coalitions of social movements and NGO's, media, the church. Over the years FIMARC has developed a global outreach. We have considered the UN and other multilateral and bilateral systems as platforms for bringing the voices of the least heard

I must specially mention that the support of donors like CCFD, Entraid et Fraternelle, MISEREOR, Broderlijk Delen, Fastenhopfer, among many others, have enabled us to carry out our mission. Our solidarity around common causes keeps FIMARC going

We will reflect on our 50 years of history as well as the experiences of others during the World Conference in Germany and we will revisit our vision, mission, goals, strategies and programs and reformulate them in light of new challenges. I believe we're ready for the next 50 years.

Let us resolve to plan wisely and continue our avowed mission with dedication and faith in the rural world.

Enjoy your reading

George Dixon Fernandez
Secretary General



GLORIOUS 50 YEARS OF FIMARC

On the occasion of the Jubilee of the FIMARC, we wanted to trace these 50 years of life of our federation through a few stages that have marked this course. Of course, you won't find everything that makes the richness of the FIMARC, as for example reports of meetings, seminars, work of the coordinators and the member movements but more a course that shows how the FIMARC has evolved since its creation.

Coming together in Lourdes (France) in April 1960, the initiators who gave birth to FIMARC, mainly former leaders of MIJARC, formulated 4 reasons to create an International Rural Catholic Organization:

1. An awareness of their solidarity and their forces in the fulfillment of their mission as Christian Rural people
2. A specific representation in the international bodies
3. Effective connections with other ICO's
4. A mutual support between the different countries and continents

One delegate from Australia, one from Haute Volta, one from Rwanda, one from Togo, one from Tunisia, one from Canada, 8 from Belgium, 9 from



France, 2 from Germany, 2 from Spain, 6 from Italy, 2 from Luxemburg, 3 from Switzerland and some delegates from the ICOs participated to this first international meeting of rural apostolate movements.

Four years later, in 1964, during the first General Assembly of FATIMA, the FIMARC was brought into life. This quite short Assembly of 4 days, allowed the participants to vote for their statutes, to elect the Executive Committee and the Bureau. As we can see in other documents or while looking to the responsible teams, the Bureau was formed with mainly European representatives. The first World Assembly gathered 51 delegates, mainly coming from Europe, 2 African delegates coming from Algeria and Haute Volta and only one coming from Uruguay. We were of course in a context with a European domination but also in a context of the end of the colonization, the end of the Vatican II council where the technical progress was considered as the only possibility to solve the hunger problems of the world.

The second World meeting took place 2 years later in 1966 in Rome. The African countries were those days 3 with the arrival of Cameroon; the Latin American countries were 4 with the arrival of Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina. All this was the result of a strong recommendation formulated from the first assembly, aiming to help the development and the animation of new movements especially in Africa and Latin America.

It was Spain that hosts in 1970 the 3rd world meeting with the strong willingness to open itself to the world that gave a result. The World meeting of Yaoundé in 1974, officially welcomed 4 new countries inside FIMARC, among those the first Asian country was Vietnam. The general

Assembly counts thus 13 members. At that time 2 priority objectives were announced: the apostolate and the education in the respect of the movement's autonomy as well as their freedom of organization and action. This is why FIMARC, from the very beginning, adopted the form of "federation".



In the context of the 60/70, the vision of development changed. The main speech still talk and claim the progress, while refer-

ring to the technical progress, to the economic growth, but the FIMARC already speaks with another voice, encouraging the access for the Southern countries to the independence considered as a main step for their development. The FIMARC passed from a "paternalist" vision of the European countries to a more equal vision. This was translated by the organization of the World meeting in another continent (out of Europe) in Yaoundé (Cameroon) with a more equal participation of the delegates coming from de 3 continents: Africa, Latin America and Europe. Important to notice that it was in October 1972, that FIMARC was officially recognized as ICO (International Catholic Organization) by the Holy See.

Over those years, the 2 main missions were still the education and the apostolate, linking the reflection of the issues "development – liberation" and "faith – commitment". All these was done with the continental meetings, revues, "letters between farmers" and training sessions. Slowly by slowly the FIMARC and its members discover that the world is not fair,



that it crushes the men and women. FIMARC wanted to reject this type of world where injustice and domination reign!

In some years, FIMARC passes from the conviction that the fight against hunger will resolve the situations of the poor countries to the exigency of development; from that moment onwards we can see the concept of food sovereignty appearing. This concept has been précised along the world meetings, the continental meetings and through the thematic adopted all over the 50 years of the federation.

During this period, FIMARC also worked at the international level with international organizations. Apart from the regular relations with the Holy See, the FIMARC benefits since the 23 April 1975, of a status in the UNESCO in the C category. This means that we can have exchanges, contributions to the recommendations to States in adult's education fields. Another important step was the abstention of a consultative status in the ECOSOC (Social and Economic Council of the UNO in Geneva) in 1977. This gave birth to our human rights working group which is still pertinent and active and represented by Gaby Falc'hun who is close to FIMARC since 1968. FIMARC also maintained contacts with the FAO but without asking for a statute, knowing how the work is important. As we did not have a group in Rome to follow the work, we chose this kind of relationship, participating in some meetings but without an official status.

In 1978, France hosted the world meeting of l'Arbresle. The FIMARC is nowadays in its rhythm of organizing a world meeting in every 4 years. During this world assembly, FIMARC evaluated its communication tools. In 1975, FIMARC started to publish the "Voice of the Rural World" that

from the very beginning addresses particular issues of the FIMARC life. This bulletin is published in 4 languages and distributed to 2500 readers. Another publication was the “notebook of the rural world” that had an objective to provide work documents and training tools to FIMARC members. Those notebooks presented the summaries and results of the continental sessions, the reports of the Executive Committee meetings and all international activities. And finally the “Letter to the Rural Movements”, the LMR that was defunded since 1976 to the countries’ responsible to facilitate the team work in each movement.

Four years later, in 1982, it was Brazil that hosts the FIMARC movements for its 7th world meeting. During this assembly, an important document was drafted, known as “The Recife Chart”, reaffirming the will of FIMARC to work for the liberation of the oppressed people. This chart declares “we are Christians, rural people with the poor, and we want to live in solidarity”.

Came back to Europe, the world meeting of Avila in 1986. An important fact to notice during this assembly was the cooptation for the first time of an Asiatic member inside the Executive Committee. Nicholas C. from India joined the Committee. The FIMARC continues its reflection, amplify its denunciation of an unfair world and took a strong orientation to denounce mechanisms of human rights, with an affirmation that the women must have access to all human rights.

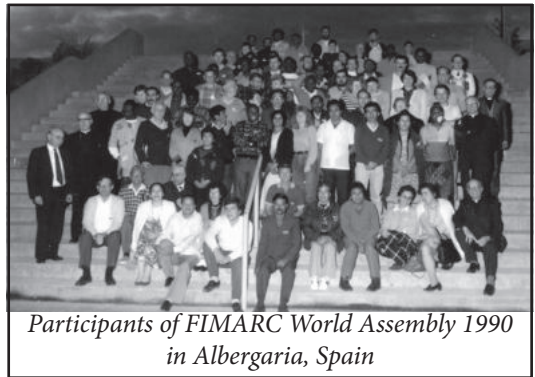
In 1990, in Albergaria, Spain, the FIMARC declares that “development, liberation are the task of all men and women, and that all Human rights are for men and women”. At that time, FIMARC takes the floor in the



Human Rights Commission in Geneva. FIMARC affirms that “the voice of the rural people must be listened and respected because it is the voice of their aspirations, their cries, their efforts and their struggles to get organized. This voice from the entire world at the highest level of the Human Rights Commission is necessary. If FIMARC is not taking the floor, who will tell all this?”

In Wépion, Belgium 1994, FIMARC celebrated its 10th world meeting and its 30 years of existence.

The FIMARC takes a more radical stand in its denunciation of the dominant system and call for a collective action to pass from a system of death to a system of life. In 1994, the representatives from the



continents were nearly present with the same number of delegates, with a god representation of the Indian country – nearly continent – bringing in FIMARC the issue of indigenous People and Dalit’s, new reality for the FIMARC.

In 1998, Spain welcomes the 11th World meeting in Miajadas. The work of denunciation continues with a stronger and appreciated presence of our Working group on Human Rights in Geneva. More than ever it is time to denounce the injustices faced by the rural populations.

During this assembly in Miajadas, this was also the first time in FIMARC’s life that the general Assembly elected a female general Secretary... The



Participants of the First FIMARC World Meeting outside Europe (Yaounde, Cameroun in 70's)

international relationship with other ICO's was also reinforced as Joseph Pirson, former General Secretary was elected as President of the ICO Conference. It was also during

this meeting that the assembly adopted the principle to organize the world assembly, in turn in the 4 continents.

And due to this decision the next assembly of 2002 was organized in Cotonou, Benin. This situation was very well accepted and gave election to the first African President, Irénée Loyara from Burkina Faso. FIMARC still continues to denounce the neo liberal system, the transnational societies and the economic market. In Benin the study session was intensive and sometimes very hot as the main topic was the decrease as an alternative to the system. But how to decrease when you have nearly not enough to satisfy the basic needs... The reflection is started...

All this was translated during the four following years in the written and oral declaration in the ECOSOC, during the participation to the WTO conferences, and other international events where FIMARC raised a strong voice to denounce all those unfair mechanisms.



FIMARC Manifestation in Cologne, Germany



After Africa, FIMARC moved in 2006 to South Korea for the next world Assembly. The topic chosen by the EXCO members was “in this time of globalization, let’s build a new era of sovereignties, of human dignity”. The topic of food sovereignty, of sovereignties was debated. Along the next years, it will be debated with focus on good governance, democracy, solidarity economy. FIMARC is no more only denouncing but is proposing reflection and action on alternatives, new models of development.

Amongst those models, the familial agriculture is one of the models that FIMARC analyze, document from the concrete experiences of the movements. In 2010, during the previous world assembly of Atyra in Paraguay, the topic was “less is more”. It is necessary to put the richness in the service



FIMARC at LUX 09 International Forum on Solidarity Economy

of wellbeing for all, thus to share it differently in a search of a society living in harmony. We don’t want to live “less” but to live “more”, in more quality of life, to forget about to “have more” but to “be more” in the sense of a full blooming of all and every one.

During the last 4 years, FIMARC tried to work those topics from the energetic decrease to the decrease in the production, in food....

FIMARC is still there and well present. And we are convinced of its utility and capacity to raise the voice of the rural people, to propose alternatives for a better life in dignity for all.



FIMARC NEWS

SYMPOSIUM ON FAMILY FARMING

FIMARC organised a symposium on how to protect and promote the family and peasant farming during the global conference with the participation of policy makers, church representatives, development agencies and Farmers organisations etc. This event discussed the real needs and challenges of Peasant/Family farming in both North and South.

FIMARC WORK SHOP ON FAMILY FARMING AT BERLIN GLOBAL FORUM FOR AGRICULTURE

In the context of UN year of family farming, KLB and FIMARC organised a panel debate on how to strengthen family farming at the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture in Berlin in January 2014. Nicole Podlinski (Chairwoman of KLB, Germany) moderated the session. George Dixon Fernandez (Secretary General of FIMARC), Leonhard Mizzi (European Commission, Directorate-General for

Agriculture & Rural Development, Head of Unit A3) Hermann Kroll-Schlüter (Former Secretary of State, Saxonia a.D., ILD-President), and Dr. Christiane Eickhoff (Project Coordinator Shanti, Potsdam) were the panellists of this global workshop. Hartmut Schneider (Chairman of the Working group for Advisory Services and Crisis Helplines for farming families on National level) and Michael Wehinger (Head of the Advisory Service for farming families of the VKL) shared their experiences in relation to the farming family counselling services in Germany.

EXPERT SEMINAR ON THE RIGHTS OF PEASANTS AND OTHER PEOPLE WORKING IN RURAL AREAS

The expert seminar took place at the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights in Villa Moynier, Geneva from 8-9 April 2014. It was an initiative of the Swiss Government and the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and

Human Rights (Geneva Academy). It aims to support States' representatives engaged in the negotiation of the UN Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. The Ambassador of Bolivia to the UN, The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter, Sofia Monsalve (Coordinator, Access to Natural Resources Programme, FIAN International), Jean Ziegler, Member of the Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Council, Karen Curtis (Deputy Director, International Labour Standards Department of ILO), George Dixon Fernandez (Secretary General of FIMARC), Melik Oznan (CE-TIM), Geneviève Savigny (Via campesina Europe) were some among the 20 experts participated in the seminar. Six themes have been chosen to cover some of the most difficult issues related to the protection of the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas in a new UN instrument. All of those issues appeared as controversial during the first session of the working group that took place in July 2013.

The six themes were:

1. The definition of peasants and other people working in rural areas
2. Peasants' right to seeds and intellectual property rights
3. Peasants' right to land and beyond
4. Labour rights and the right to social security of peasants and other people working in rural areas
5. Beyond the rights of peasants: How to better protect the rights of other people working in rural areas?
6. The integration of the obligations of States and non-state actors in a UN

Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas

It was not a public event, but a closed seminar between experts, States representatives and key civil society organizations. Around 20 States' representatives together with 20 experts and 10 civil society representatives attended the conference.



*Message from Pope Francis for the Jubilee Celebration of FIMARC is reading by
Mgr. Josef Clemens (Secretary of the Pontifical Council For Laity)*

VMR

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