

CONTINUING THE VISION OF SAINT CAMILLUS AND THE LEGACY OF THE CAMILLIAN MARTYRS OF CHARITY

“Everyone, therefore, who would like to join our Institute, should know, that he must die to himself, if he is given such a great grace by the Holy Spirit and should not worry about death nor life, neither infirmity nor health, but entirely dead to the world, he should give himself completely to the will of God, under perfect obedience to his superiors, giving up totally of his will. He should consider it a great gain to die for the crucified Jesus Christ our Lord, who says: “there is no greater love than to give one’s life for one’s friends...”, for the glory of God, the salvation of one’s soul and that of our neighbor.”

(Prologue, The Constitution of the Order of the Ministers of the Infirm)

CADIS is taking the prophetic call of being a Camillian in the new Millennium by storm, growing leaps and bounds on an international level seriously. CADIS is becoming bold in its global intervention of building a resilient community where people are affected or exposed to natural and human-made disasters. It is growing a lot in its mission of promoting the development of community-based integral health programs for the well-being of disaster-stricken communities through compassionate, competent and coordinated interventions. It is a leap from the top-down to the bottom-up approach of ministering to the suffering humanity.

We can dedicate this success to the diligent work of our active and passionate members - confreres, priests, religious and lay - who continue to support our mission and participate actively in the various projects and emergency interventions. CADIS engagement in the humanitarian world began with a selected group of Camillians and lay collaborators. At present, the seed that was planted has grown into a tree where its branches are bearing fruits of a significant number and diverse participation of Camillians, lay, priest and religious forming into CADIS or CTF provincial or delegation based organization and the local and international partner organizations engaged in humanitarian and development work.

A Past Revisited

Our mission began formally in 2000 when the Consulta has formed the Camillian Task Force (CTF), an emergency team formed by religious and lay collaborators specialized in humanitarian emergency intervention ready to respond anywhere in the world, especially in countries where the Camillians have their mission. CTF has counted on the readiness of the religious with the mandate of his respective superior to respond to the emergency call. Following the inspiration of its predecessors and the new signs of the times, the CTF has evolved into a Foundation called the Camillian Disaster Service (CADIS) in 2014. A highly specialized international team no longer composes CADIS but of a nationally-based CADIS or CTF organization whose members are trained confreres, religious and lay volunteers whose primary mission is to build a fully resilient vulnerable community to disaster through empowerment.

CADIS approach in disaster interventions passed through different stages of maturation. The initial stage (2000 - 2009) is defined by a specialized team of Camillian religious and laypersons who are trained to respond in times of natural disaster particularly in countries where there is a Camillian mission. It could be likened to the International Red Cross (IRC) or Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) but distinguished itself by its holistic and spiritual (or pastoral) approach. Its primary focus of intervention is emergency response (medical, humanitarian, pastoral). The second stage (2009 – 2014) is defined by a multi-player approach with other like-minded organizations. It opened itself for structured collaboration with other like-minded humanitarian

organizations in responding to disasters not only in terms of funding but of program implementation. It is the moment of opening the table of a partnership of equals sharing a joint mission. Its focus on intervention is emergency and rehabilitation. The third stage (2014 up to the present) of its development is characterized by a multi-stakeholder and community-based approach intervention. The third stage distinguished itself from the previous stages of being a vision-oriented organization, i.e., to build a fully resilient community. It considers the disaster-affected communities as inevitable partners and primary stakeholders in any CADIS' response to the situation of emergency. Furthermore, CADIS does not only intervene when a disaster occurs but it took into consideration the different cycles as against a linear approach of disaster response, namely, relief, rehabilitation, resilience and rights (4Rs). Thus, the key to our response depends on a firm analysis of the community's vulnerability.

Key to the Reading of Disasters

A new concept that has been espoused by CADIS in their disaster response is the concept of vulnerability. "Vulnerability is the human dimension of disasters and is the result of the range of economic, social, cultural, institutional, political, and psychological factors that shape people's lives and the environment that they live in (Twigg, 2004)." It also concerns the wider environmental and social conditions that limit people and communities to cope with the impact of disaster (cf. Birkmann, 2006)." More often, the susceptibility of people and their economic assets help to explain why some non-extreme hazards can lead to extreme impacts and disasters, while some extreme events do not. (cf. IPCC, 2012).

A classic example was the earthquakes in Chile in February 2010 and Haiti in January 2010. The earthquake in Chile with a magnitude of **8.8** has killed more than 500 people, while the **7.0** magnitude earthquake in Haiti had an estimated death of 250,000. Thus, Haiti is more vulnerable than Chile. Therefore, in responding to disasters, CADIS is applying the vulnerability principle of analyzing the impact of a particular event.

"Vulnerability analysis involves understanding the root causes or drivers of vulnerability, but also people's capacities cope and recover from disasters. Since we cannot reduce the occurrence and severity of natural hazards, reducing vulnerability is one of the main opportunities for reducing disaster risk. Vulnerability changes over time because many of the processes that influence vulnerability are dynamic [...] (Twigg, 2004)."

On the other hand, vulnerability is also an essential key to the mitigation of the impact of disasters. "Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper or more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path (Brene Brown, 2012)." The vulnerable and fragile human condition is the driver for human solidarity and humanity. When a person is aware of his vulnerability, he becomes conscious of the others. It is here that one realizes that he is a being for and with others. Thus, he becomes spiritual, an authentic search for a sense of meaning, purpose, moral frameworks and connection with what they believe is most profound or sacred in their life. (cf. Perry Benson et al.)

The Way Forward

Thanks to the collaboration of the Provinces and Delegations of the Order. It responded to humanitarian emergencies not only in countries where the Camillians are present but elsewhere as long as there is a need for our presence and possibilities to serve. Today, we follow in their footsteps as we continue to raise the bar and set firm goals striving to offer better and qualified

services with a clear vision of establishing a fully-resilient community.

The complex situation of our era demands a bold, organized and strategic humanitarian response to the new disasters. Every year, CADIS members are provided with professional and technical training on disaster management which commonly called the Bangkok Conference. We availed to our members team-building strategies, strategic planning, training for organizational, personal and spiritual growth, linking and establishing a partnership with like-minded individuals and organizations across the world.

Currently, our strength consists of over 50 members worldwide, and we have managed over 24 projects in 12 countries with a total amount of 2.474.996,19 million euros in six years (2014-2020). Over 500 volunteers have been mobilized in the different intervention with the direct participation of around 50 Camillian religious. We have experienced significant growth in Asia and America, particularly in the USA in terms of mobilization of human and financial resources. Furthermore, we continue to grow our presence internationally as we are developing Chapters in Africa and Latin America.

When I first joined CADIS in 2010, taking my first mission abroad in Pakistan, I joined right away as I was moved by the witnessing of my predecessors especially St. Camillus de Lellis and the Martyrs of Charity and the prophetic challenge of the time to journey with the most vulnerable in the peripheries (geographical and existential). I told myself my plate was full and that there was no room to get too involved. Today I am taking on the wonderful honor of Director and enjoying every aspect of being involved with this amazing organization that has allowed me personal growth in mentoring, accompanying and working with the team.

A good confrere of mine has asked: "what makes CADIS different from other humanitarian organizations"? I answered: "while the nature of our projects is almost identical but the way do it is unique!". CADIS upholds its belief that to make our intervention more impactful and meaningful, we always take into consideration the participation of the survivors as primary stakeholders and drivers to the success of the projects. They felt valued and respected which strengthened their resilience and created a transformation in their lives in the community. I encourage you to become involved because what you give will make a difference in the life of survivors, our Order as well as your life. This is a concrete expression of our prophetism, an action that is not only armored and motivated by sheer feeling of being charitable but above all by the desire for authentic empowerment and transformation of the most vulnerable communities.

The journey is still far and we have not yet reached our vision. The biggest obstacle to this mission is the lack of openness and incapacity and even resistance to reading the signs of the times. We need to overcome our evangelical illiteracy. For us Camillians, we need to be reminded of the radicality of our fourth vow. This radicality literally from the conviction of Saint Camillus and our predecessors, the martyrs of charity, means the willingness to confront death when it is necessary for the good of the sick person. It means the possibility and not just probability. This is the original spirit of the fourth vow of St. Camillus, which in our Constitution translated into "even at the risk of life." (cf. Brusco and Alvarez eds., *The Camillian Spirituality*, pp. 94-95).

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