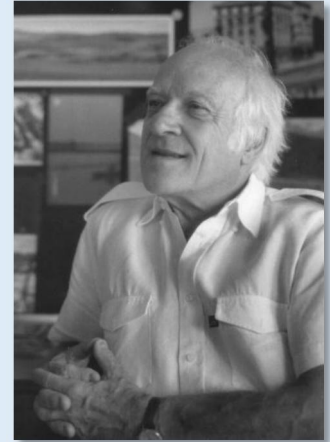




Dona Un Sorriso is a Volunteer Organization (OdV) founded on October 6, 1998 by Roberto Calmi, its actual President. Dona Un Sorriso is made up exclusively of highly motivated people in the social field, who work on a completely voluntary basis with commitment, enthusiasm and dedication.

MISSION : Dona Un Sorriso aims to express its solidarity with the most disadvantaged populations in the world through a concrete and continuous commitment in order to reduce social exclusion, with particular attention to **women, children and adolescents** in a state of need and abandonment, giving them the human dignity that would otherwise be ignored or trampled upon.



ACTIONS: it is considered of fundamental importance that the **Partner Organizations are of local origin**, born there, wanted and supported by the local population. They have indissoluble roots with the ethnic groups, history and cultures of the place. In this way, actions are carried out through the **involvement of local people and organizations**, whose contribution is central, substantial and decisive.

Our **selected Partners** operate with absolute seriousness and professionalism in synergy with Dona Un Sorriso and share its moral, ethical and human dignity protection principles. The commitment of Dona Un Sorriso does not only cover the economic aspect, but extends to a sharing in the problems and choices of the Partners who plan and manage the interventions on site.

Dona Un Sorriso operates solely through volunteering (no operator earns a single euro), so **all the donations received are totally sent** to the beneficiary organizations.

SITES: The aid is directed to organizations that operate in Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Uganda and Italy, as documented in the following.



BOLIVIA



Quechua and Aymara are indigenous communities who have taken refuge in the Andine highland for many decades to escape the Spanish who were hunting for slaves to force into the silver mines of Potosí. There are settlements of a few hundred people, with a very high percentage of children, who maintain a very effective social organization. Although it may seem rather primitive, no child is abandoned by their parents or the community. Their problem is not – as in other countries where we are present – abandonment or violence, but it is rather **hunger**.

The people are very hardworking, but the **climate conditions are extreme**. The rains last three months a year and at that altitude (from 3,700 to **4,100 meters above sea level**) the land gives very little: they can grow only potatoes, some cereals and some beans. There is never any snow, but the nights are cold all year round and the sun never adequately warm the earth. A few cows and sheep are raised, but all the rhythms of nature are slowed and even the animals grow very slowly.



The great temptation for them is to move to the cities, but this would lead them to settle in the most degraded neighborhoods, where crime, violence and corruption are at home. It is much better for them to remain in their mountains, poor but dignified as they are now. Through a local organization called VOSERDEM, Dona Un Sorriso is sharing the strategy to **helping Andean people to remain in their land** and therefore provides support for schoolchildren living in the highlands and for elderly people in extreme hardship in Cochabamba.



The President of VOSERDEM Dr. Gonzalo Alfaro Denus is a university professor, a very efficient person with explosive enthusiasm. His dream is to give opportunities to the communities of the plateau, taking advantage of his and his collaborators' great knowledge, mainly in the agricultural field, with crops and cultivation techniques adapted to the hostile environment at 4000 meters a.s.l. and in energy issues.



The **diet** that VOSERDEM offers to children also contains rice, carrots, tomatoes, pumpkins, vegetables, all things that those people may have never seen. With a little care, these are crops that can also be planted in those areas and that could improve everyone's nutrition.

VOSERDEM's strategy is twofold. Properly feeding hungry children is not all. In fact, the **children's parents are called to contribute** to the management of canteens, both with food (they bring potatoes, flour and a few sheep) and labor, that is offered in abundance and free of charge with an admirable organization. This involvement has a very important function for families and parents, as it makes them participate in their own improvement and strengthens the sense of ownership of the projects conducted in the territory.



A **University for the youngs of the Andean plateau** has been strongly desired by Voserdem, and finally built in 2023 in **Sacaca** in collaboration with the Bolivian Catholic University and a German humanitarian organization. In 2024, Prosolidar Foundation and Dona Un Sorriso are providing two-years scholarships to 12 deserving students with poor families. The University offers **agronomy, nursing and administration courses, laboratories, accommodation and a canteen** (many students come from distant villages). It will train professionals that will **support their indigenous communities and encourage them to stay on the Andean plateau.**

In Cochabamba, Mrs Charo Soto, a collaborator of Voserdem, founded a small community center for about eighty people, mostly women (the **abuelitas**), elderly and alone. They are given food, a place to meet and socialize, but most of all, lots of human warmth. Dona Un Sorriso provides a modest contribution to this small center.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

A brief but necessary historical note. In the twenties and thirties of the last century, many **Haitians** were deported from their country to the Dominican plantations and were "employed" for a few decades in conditions of semi-slavery as sugar cane cutters. In the 1970s the world market for cane sugar collapsed and that activity was almost totally abandoned. Currently, about 400 settlements, called bateyes, are populated by **400,000 people of Haitian origin** who have lived there for two or three generations, but no longer have any ties with their country of origin and, in the Dominican Republic, they are without documents, discriminated against by a vile racism. Haina is a degraded suburb of Santo Domingo and is one of the most polluted cities in the world, where undocumented Haitians working in the cane sugar factories used to live.



The **children** are numerous, many of them are undocumented and therefore for the state they "do not exist": for them it is very problematic to have access to education, health care or social status. Many **abandoned girls, children and adolescents** first of all need adequate nutrition and support to be able to attend the school.

Here the **girls** face an even more difficult life: they are pushed to leave school earlier and undergo **early pregnancies, child marriages and child labor**. The situation remains very serious despite some timid and contradictory steps carried forward by the Dominican state.



Since 2002 Dona Un Sorriso operates in collaboration with two local partners in favour of children of Haitian origin living in conditions of absolute poverty (ONE' RESPE in Haina and C.C.D.H. in San Pedro de Macoris).

ONÉ RESPE (meaning "Honor and Respect" in Creole Language is the usual form of greeting) is a highly regarded organization in the Dominican Republic, in the assistance to Dominicans in poverty and to Haitians without documents.



The **Dominican Ministry of Education** has entrusted **Oné Respe** with the management of a new **primary and secondary school**, attended by about **800 students** in a poor suburb of Santiago: the Government has built the structure and pays the teachers, but has entrusted Oné Respe with their recruitment and management, a fairly usual formula in the Dominican Republic given the shortcomings of state organizations.

Among other activities, ONÉ RESPE has built and manages **two primary schools in Haina** (El Cacique and Bella Vista), including school canteens, in a context of enormous economic, cultural and moral poverty.

For years we have been supporting the school canteens of these two schools.



In 2020 with the help of Waldesian Church we have supported the project **“Help to a community in conditions of extreme discomfort”** in Los Perez, a suburb of Santiago, which suffers of conditions similar to those of Haina.



UGANDA

Dona un Sorriso support health care for mothers and children in Luweero through the BISHOP CAESAR ASILI HOSPITAL. The hospital (a private and non-profit organization) was founded in 1993 by the Ugandan congregation “Mary Mother of the Church” in Luweero, 70 km north of Kampala. The hospital is directed by Sister Ernestine Akulu, whom some members of Dona Un Sorriso knew well during her staying in Bresso in 1988 and who has been followed in her apostolic activities since then.



Thanks to her tireless work and commitment, the hospital has now become an important point of reference not only for the Luweero district, but also for the neighboring ones (Nakaseke and Nakasongola), which count more than **800,000 people** belonging to poor farming families and that do not have equivalent health services. In April 2013 the hospital obtained official **certification from the Ugandan Ministry of Health**.

The diseases mostly affecting the people are **malaria** and **HIV/AIDS**, but there is also **thalassemia, many orphans**, in a rural region of great material and cultural poverty.



Over the years, Dona Un Sorriso has supported several projects for the construction of an **operating room**, a room for **post-surgical hospitalization** and a ward dedicated to accommodate **AIDS patients**.

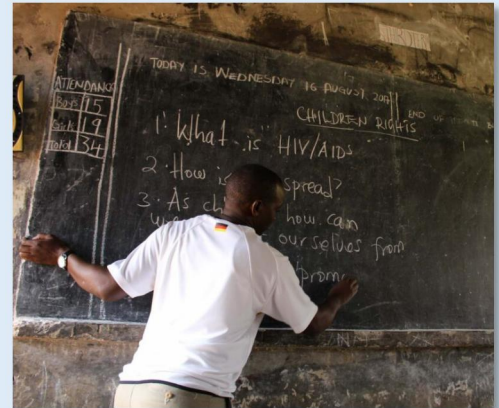
The “**Adopt a doctor**” project has been ongoing for years based on the economic sustain of the community in Bresso (Milan). The project annually covers the salary of Dr. Charles Lwanga, a very good Ugandan surgeon. The hospital now have 3 full time doctors, guaranteeing the presence 24/7. More than 3,000 surgical interventions have been performed over the years.





“School for nurses and midwives”, built with support from Italian Episcopal Conference, will train young people by providing them with professional opportunities, which will also be of great help to their communities.

Health education project: Contact persons are identified within the villages (usually the village chiefs) and properly trained on basic hygiene practices (especially for AIDS/HIV prevention), cultivation and breeding to improve nutrition, fundamental people's rights and protection of women and children. Information will be then fruitfully spread in the village by authoritative and trustworthy persons.



Care of orphans with AIDS: more than 300 orphan children registered for antiretroviral treatment do not receive adequate nutrition to make treatment effective. They also suffer from abuse, injustice and the absence of a family to refer to. In addition to offering food, the hospital promotes assistance to families who are also provided with means of support (farm animals), while the older children are educated in vocational schools.

“Light for life” project was financed in 2022 by the Tavola Valdese and Dona un Sorriso, it provided essential equipment and installations to reduce the occurrence and damage caused by **frequent and prolonged blackouts**: a voltage stabilizer, LED lighting fixtures, hot water solar panels and the improvement of the entire electrical network of the hospital.



Other projects include a “Youth Cooperative Center” to help young people find a job; “Mental Illness” to help the sick, excluded from village life, and their families

ITALIA



Political Refugees are people who, for reasons of political dissent, religion or race, after very painful events, manage to escape and reach Europe. They are not foreigners driven by the desire to improve their economic living conditions, but fugitives escaping a terrible fate. They have had to abandon their loved ones, and their families.

Here they have their lives saved, but they are torn people: all their mental energies are always directed towards their terrible past and they are not able - especially in the early days - to articulate a life project in this country.

Helping these people is a delicate and difficult task. Our commitment is to **accompanying refugees in their integration process**, showing them suitable paths to be able to hope for a job, a home, an autonomy that allows them to reunite with their family. **It is important, for all of us, that these “desperate” people do not enter criminal circles, but become honest workers and honest citizens, with a peaceful future.**



Our story begins in 1999 with a small group of volunteers assisting refugees. Through many events, today a group of **8 volunteers** give assistance to **16 refugees in 4 homes**, obtained on loan or rented from the municipality, from religious institutions or associations.



We welcome political refugees and asylum seekers leaving first reception facilities, who are not yet able to lead an independent life. They are **reported to us by reception centers** linked to the state system of protection for refugees and asylum seekers (Red Cross, Municipalities, Pastoral Community and other institutions). For each of them, a **personal growth project** is outlined to support them until they will be able to leave the accommodation and become independent.



Besides offering accommodation and obtaining documents, to promote their social and work integration, we collaborate with organizations that organize **Italian courses** for foreigners and **orientation to the world of work** (active research, activation of internships, search for job placements). We think that **their presence in the area is an opportunity for awareness and growth for the ecclesial and civil community**. For this reason, we carry out some **cultural promotion activities** relating to the themes of welcoming refugees.

Over the course of all these years, up to 2024, **113 refugees** or asylum seekers have been welcomed. In almost all cases, we have managed to **accompany them towards an independent and satisfying life**, also encouraging family reunifications. In 2024 we obtained a funding from Waldesian Church, allowing us to further qualifying our activity.

Our approach to guests is not limited to helping them overcome difficulties or material problems, but we try to **establish a deeper relationship** with them, which often lasts over time, even after they leave our homes.



Further informations:

Web page: <https://www.donaunsorriso.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/donaunsorrisoonlus/>