

Annual Summary 2020



**Working for
a better world
where everyone
belongs**

The fundamental experience of L'Arche, is that of an encounter between "differently abled" people, which reveals both the vulnerability and the beauty of our human condition. From Paris to Harare, from Kolkata to Washington, this transformational experience, lived in diverse cultural contexts, is universal. At a time when the planet has been damaged by the pandemic and when environmental and geopolitical tensions are exacerbated, we affirm that this reminder of our common humanity is a necessary condition for building a sustainable and peaceful world.

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A year of shock, resilience, support and gratitude

A letter from our International Leaders.

Dear friends,

2020 was a year shaped by two successive shocks, each within a few weeks of the other: the publication in February of the results of the investigation initiated by L'Arche International into Jean Vanier, and the COVID 19 pandemic and its many impacts.

While we praise the resilience and creativity of our communities around the world, we do not want to overlook the strain, fatigue, or grief we have been through individually and collectively. The pandemic, in particular, has forced us to make great adaptations and commitments to sustain the life of our communities.

The inquiry results have been distressing for many, especially those who have been with L'Arche for many years. Yet these trials have also been marked by thousands of expressions of support received from within and outside L'Arche.

We feel a deep sense of gratitude to our friends and members, with and without intellectual disabilities, for the contribution each has made to the life of our communities, their ongoing commitment to our mission in the face of these challenges and their contribution to building a more human society.

With gratitude,



Stephan Posner
International Leader



Stacy Cates-Carney
Vice-International Leader

Fragility and strength in the face of the pandemic

Complex health and support needs of our members increase the risks associated with Covid and make protective measures essential, particularly in countries where health systems are failing.

Some regions have been particularly hard hit, such as Latin America, India and the Middle East. The prospect of widespread access to vaccination is still remote in many places.

Challenges faced by L'Arche communities in the pandemic are:

- Teams are tired; rotations are limited, and assistants work for long periods of time. The international volunteer program, which is a valuable resource in many communities has been suspended. In many communities, assistants have not been able to see their families and friends.
- The situation of people with intellectual disabilities who live with their families is particularly complex, especially for those living in situations marked by poverty and lack of resources. L'Arche communities are trying to maintain links with them and to provide them with support.
- The economic impact, which threatens the financial balance of the communities, and the wellbeing of countless neighbours and friends.

In spite of these challenges we also recognize the strength of our networks of relationships, and the great capacity for adaptation and creativity. Communities have focused on opportunities to improve health and reduce stress, finding ways to nourish links at a distance, animating online workshops to reach people with a disability in their families, and working in relay with government agencies for the distribution of material aid and solidarity.



"In times of crisis, belonging to a supportive community like L'Arche makes all the difference."

Giving and receiving support

L'Arche communities became places of support for friends and neighbors.

L'Arche Mymingsingh, Bangladesh Millions have lost their jobs in Bangladesh and fallen into poverty. The community worked hard to arrange enough in-kind donations to share food with 30 families of people with intellectual disabilities and neighbors. This sharing has continued in 2021.

L'Arche Honduras Again, because of their work to arrange in-kind donations, the community was able to relieve some deep suffering among their neighbors. Members with intellectual disabilities clearly expressed their desire to share with others out of the security and belonging they experience in L'Arche.

"This year we felt close to the Federation not only because of the financial support but knowing there were people who were concerned about our health and emotional well-being. We felt very grateful for this." L'Arche Tegucigalpa, Honduras

L'Arche Kaunas in Lithuania, received vital PPE from the LAISV ÉSS TV support fund.



L'Arche Zimbabwe offered support to local families with children with intellectual disabilities. The community visited Tadiwa and his mother, even when travelling was difficult.



Tadiwa and his mother are members of L'Arche Zimbabwe. His mother says *"The visits of the L'Arche outreach team during the Covid period made us feel that we are part of a caring community which reminded us that we are not alone."*

In India, **L'Arche in Kolkata, Bangalore and Chennai** supported neighbours with children with intellectual disabilities by delivering food.



Finding and celebrating each person's gifts

A key value of L'Arche is the commitment to empower people with intellectual disabilities to be full participants in decision making, daily activities, and outreach projects where they can play an important role in society.

L'Arche Zimbabwe In 2020, Concillia Chitatu chose to become involved with preparing meals for her community in Zimbabwe. Concillia's words are not always easy to understand, but her eloquence in the kitchen is undeniable. Each day she takes fresh vegetables from the garden and transforms them into mouth-watering salads.

L'Arche Querataro in Mexico, continued to organise the daily workshop remotely during lockdown – making sure members with intellectual disabilities had supplies at home and could connect through video. Jorge Luis surprised his mother by revealing he is a gifted artist. Over the last year, he has created 15 pieces of art from home and has received two different offers to buy his work!

"Making meals every day is my passion," says Concillia.



Social enterprise that puts people with intellectual disabilities at the centre

L'Arche Kovcheh in Ukraine, is developing a project to make and sell dumplings. So far, kitchen renovations are complete, permission to operate as a social enterprise has been secured, the project manager has completed a social entrepreneur training program, and specialized dumpling making equipment has been purchased. Training for people with and without intellectual disabilities, and testing of the production process continues, and a new website for the project is being created. L'Arche Ukraine is grateful to the financial partners of this project.



L'Arche Alexandria in Egypt, is developing a guest house, cafeteria and hub for community activities, to expand their network, offer purposeful roles for people with intellectual disabilities and generate income. Renovations are not yet complete but in 2020 the guest house was able to offer emergency shelter for Samir and his family, when the roof of their house was destroyed by rain.



Samir who is part of the project says *"I am useful and valued, people in L'Arche appreciate me a lot, it's another family for me."*

L'Arche Paris in France, Aboubacar works at Café Joyeux, in Paris which employs cooks and waiters with intellectual disabilities. He was one of the stars of their 2020 advertising campaign.



Discovering our true purpose together

Throughout 2020, L'Arche communities around the world continued in the reflection, conversation and sharing to create a new charter for L'Arche. They were encouraged to think about what inspires them about L'Arche and to create and share expressions of those conversations as part of a 3-year process to discern what unites us.



Distilling the essence of our mission

Irish Poet and theologian Pádraig Ó Tuama is walking with L'Arche to develop the new charter. He told L'Arche's extended leadership gathered, from around the world, that the work on the charter is a distillation process. Here is an excerpt from that talk.

"So whiskey is made primarily from barley and water. And then it's spread out and turned and dried and mixed with hot water and mixed with yeast and then fermentation happens and it's put in a pot and it's distilled and fermented again and it's left. Sometimes for 8 years or 12 years or 15 or 17 (or 25 if you've got a lot of money!). And ultimately, what you are doing in this whole distillation process is trying to figure out, 'How can we taste the authenticity of the land where this water and this barley came from?'

The whole difficult process of distilling whiskey is to return to the authentic source. And it takes a long time and a lot of skill and a lot of patience and needs to be returned to over and over. To return to something is to discern the past. And that process of distillation, I think, is something that this charter process is doing.

I think the destination you are searching for is to know what is at the heart of your communities, communities of celebration and trust and lamentation. I think the mystery around which L'Arche is gathered is the mystery of human dignity; and you also know that the mystery around which L'Arche is gathered is the mystery of human brokenness and human damage; and this is a tension that you hold in yourselves, which I am moved by. How can L'Arche be a sign about what it means to live with that tension?"



Supporting L'Arche around the world to build a culture of respect and inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities



Communities operating without the support of a national structure face particularly complex challenges. L'Arche envoys play a critical role in supporting communities. They work closely with both board members and local leaders to develop strategy and connect them to the broader Federation, including formation opportunities focusing on L'Arche values. Together with the international fundraising team they also help to build fundraising capacity locally and assist with development goals. Communities are also assisted by the international fundraising office both in the development of grant applications and also in building fundraising capacity locally where possible.

Building partnerships

For the last two years, L'Arche in India has been working on a pilot program to develop a care-giving course that teaches L'Arche's model of relationship-based care and the value and dignity of every human being. They are now officially partnered with a nationally recognized training organization for caregivers. Through this partnership, L'Arche assistants will receive qualifications; raising the quality of care by L'Arche assistants and making L'Arche more attractive to individuals looking for professional growth. There is also future potential for L'Arche to be licensed to deliver the entire program directly to caregivers from other NGOs, spreading the relationship-based care values of L'Arche further.



Combining professional competence with L'Arche values is part of our commitment to safeguarding

The L'Arche International Formation program is designed to embed L'Arche values and practices alongside professional competence around the Federation and beyond. In 2020, the L'Arche International formation team worked with L'Arche Zimbabwe, local university professors and local professionals to develop a relationship-based care formation program rooted in the local context for 15 participants from Zimbabwe, Uganda and Kenya.

The aim of the course was to prepare and empower assistants and people who work with people with intellectual disabilities, increasing their professional competence as part of L'Arche's commitment to safeguarding across the Federation.

L'Arche Zimbabwe has also developed education and physiotherapy projects that welcome neighbors from the wider geographic community. These projects model the L'Arche approach to engaging wider society.

"From a community perspective the course has strengthened our commitment to work more professionally; it has enabled us to start a small-scale community-based rehabilitation project with local children and to look beyond our own small community to the wider needs of our neighbours."

Brian Kelly, Community Leader L'Arche Uganda



Meeting the challenge to better understand our past

In February 2020, L'Arche International published the results of an external inquiry that revealed founder Jean Vanier initiated sexual relationships with six adult women without intellectual disabilities, usually within the context of spiritual direction. These relationships were found to be manipulative and emotionally abusive and had a significant negative impact on the lives and subsequent relationships of the women involved. The inquiry confirmed that Vanier adopted some of the deviant theories and practices of his mentor, Father Thomas Philippe.

As a follow up to the inquiry, in autumn 2020 L'Arche International asked a study commission to take a deeper look at L'Arche's past, in particular Jean Vanier's role in L'Arche, as well as L'Arche's overall functioning as an organization. This work is now underway.

The commission includes researchers and professionals specializing in human and social sciences and will run until the end of 2022. A scientific committee has been appointed to oversee the commission's methodology.

The commission will use historical archives and interviews with long-time L'Arche members and/or people who were close to Jean Vanier. Given the central role of Thomas Philippe and his brother Marie-Dominique Philippe, the researchers will work closely with people from religious orders, including the Dominican Order, the Brothers of Saint John and with the Catholic Church in France.

More information about the study commission is available on the website www.larche.org



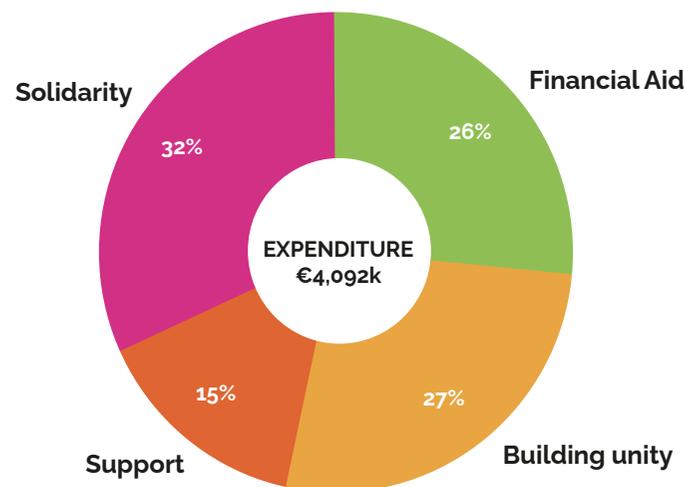
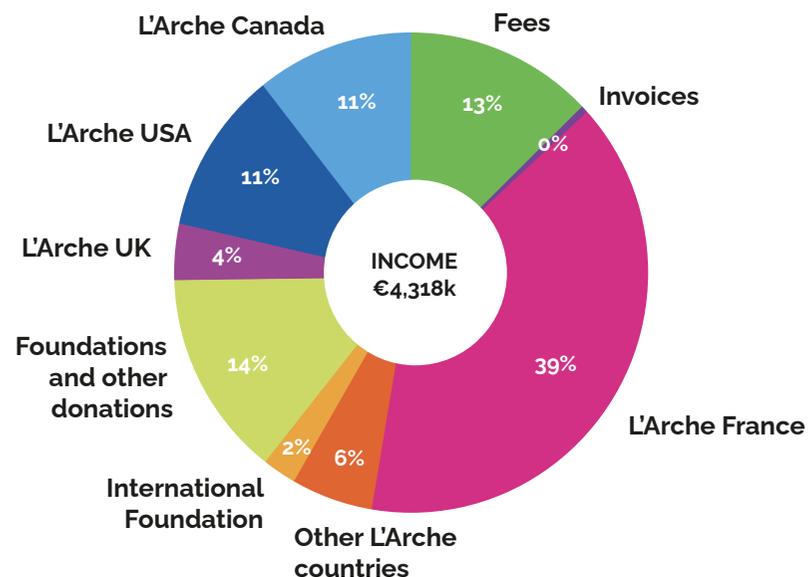
Your donations made a difference in 2020

L'Arche International provides leadership and strategic direction for the Federation of L'Arche communities across the world. In addition, it provides financial support and ensures accountability for L'Arche communities outside France, Canada, the USA and the UK.

Your support ensures all our communities have the resources they need to fully live the mission of L'Arche. This financial investment makes possible the creative and empowering leadership, formation, learning, communication and fundraising, which the Federation needs to flourish. Capital projects help L'Arche grow and ensure everyone is living and working in healthy, accessible and enabling surroundings. In 2020:

- **L'Arche Ivory Coast** welcomed the first people with intellectual disabilities to Roger house in March of 2020. Today there are 6 people with intellectual disabilities and 4 assistants living in the house.
- **L'Arche Uganda** celebrated its 30th anniversary with the renovation of Thomas and Lamula houses.
- **L'Arche México** opened a new workshop and welcomed 6 new people with intellectual disabilities.
- **L'Arche Asansol** in India, fixed the roof and drainage system, improving safety, health and hygiene for all members before the monsoon season.

Most L'Arche communities welcome adults with intellectual disabilities. However many of our communities in developing economies also welcome children.



Reserves €1,610k | Surplus €226k



156 COMMUNITIES
27 PROJECTS*
38 COUNTRIES



IRELAND
 Belfast (N. Ireland)
 Cork
 Dublin
 Kilkenny

SPAIN
 El Rusc
 Els Avets
 Madrid*

UNITED KINGDOM
 Bognor Regis
 Brecon
 Edinburgh
 Highland
 Ipswich
 Kent
 Liverpool
 London (UK)
 Manchester
 Preston
 Nottingham*

NETHERLANDS
 Gouda
 Haarlem*

BELGIUM
 Bruxelles
 Antwerpen
 Bierges
 Aywaille
 Namur
 Moerkerke-Brugge
 Gent

GERMANY
 Landsberg
 Tecklenburg
 Ravensburg

SWITZERLAND
 La Corolle
 Fribourg
 Im Nauen

AUSTRIA
 Tirol

ITALY
 Il Chicco
 Arcobaleno
 Cagliari*

CZECH REPUBLIC
 Benediktus*
 Villa Valiila*

SLOVENIA
 Skupnost Barka

POLAND
 Poznan
 Stedziejowice
 Warszawa
 Wroclaw
 Gdynia*

CROATIA
 Zagreb

LITHUANIA
 Betzata
 Kaunas

UKRAINE
 Kovcheh
 Ternopil*





In spring 2020, thanks to *Tulipes and Cie*, L'Arche International was able to share 8 short films featuring life in L'Arche communities around the world during the lockdown. The resulting *Life Goes On* campaign channeled creativity and helped communities around the world build some communication and fundraising skills.

To recognize the UN's *International Day for People with Disabilities*, on December 3rd L'Arche International released a film featuring Roman Maksymovych from L'Arche Ukraine reciting a poem by Vasyly Symonenko.



Engaging with the world around us



Also in 2020, L'Arche Canada created *Battle of the Fans*, the world's first Lip Sync video competition and fundraiser hosted by people with intellectual disabilities. 28 communities participated and together they raised over \$100,000 CAD.





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156 Communities

27 Projects

38 Countries

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