

Notizie dal Portico



Newsletter from Associazione "Il Portico di San Giuseppe ONLUS"

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Happy Easter!



Tiny things described in this newsletter aim to be a simple testimony of peace, of the peace that we feel is increasingly urgent and necessary in an era marked by conflicts and selfishness.

Peace is built together: these pages tell the story of some encounters, they are our thanks for your trust and support, they are our wishes for an Easter in which hope may be reborn.

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News from Casa Maia

Casa Maia continues to welcome and support young people entering the job market.

The initiative aims to tackle the persistent housing crisis in our country, worsened by scarce housing and the surge in short-term tourist rentals. Rentals availability fails to meet the needs of families, students, and workers, driving up costs and often making required rental guarantees impossible to meet. This problem, repeatedly exposed by unrealistic property ads and student protests, still needs structural, long-term solutions.

Homelessness creates extreme vulnerability, impacting every aspect of life. Casa Maia specifically helps young people in their first jobs who lack family support. This is a delicate situation: many young workers, mostly foreign, are forced to sleep on the streets after work. Despite having money enough for housing, job precarity, high rents, and anti-foreigner prejudice prevent them from finding accommodation, hindering job retention, career growth, and their chance to start a family.



Casa Maia provides temporary shelter for some of them, allowing them to seek better lives without the fear of homelessness.

Since 2020, Casa Maia has provided temporary accommodation for about fifteen young people aged 20 to 35, who have come from other shelters or directly from street life.

These are predominantly young men from abroad: not because the facility is exclusively for them, but simply because they face greater challenges in integrating. For many, Casa Maia's support has been vital: in 2024, for instance, two young men moved out after a period of growth and stability. They arrived as unemployed or with insecure jobs, and left now having permanent jobs and independent housing. Mission accomplished, indeed.



Current Casa Maia residents.

Consequently, we were recently able to welcome two new residents. The news that two beds became available at the end of 2024 generated a surge of requests, underscoring the severity of the housing crisis. To choose two, we interviewed at least 10 people, and many other requests were left unanswered. We felt frustrated that we couldn't offer everyone an opportunity they deserved.

Casa Maia's experience is teaching us that seemingly intractable problems can find creative solutions by building trust, overcoming the suspicion that undermines our relationships, and fostering a culture rooted in friendship and solidarity.



project moves forward

In the previous issue of this newsletter, we informed you about the launch of the SPOT project and, specifically, the inauguration of the Training Center (INZU Y'AMAHUGURWA) in the small community of Busengo, Rwanda.

The project continues its work: at the start of 2025, we re-funded the essential school support for the second semester, **covering school fees and living expenses for approximately one hundred children** and young people, enabling them to continue their education.

In parallel, the **training center kept operating consistently**. A first three-month "Basket weaving" course has finished, equipping around ten local young women with the skills needed to establish their own handicraft businesses.

The first tailoring course, which began in September 2024 and involves about fifteen women, is wrapping up now. A second tailoring course will start soon..



Adrien, managing the training facilities, shows (and wears) some handicraft.



A few tailoring trainees

This period has also been a time for thinking on how to further develop the SPOT initiative. The community has many needs, and deciding where to focus our efforts is challenging. The project aims to support the community's growth and independence, without taking over their responsibility for identifying priorities and urgent needs.

We have much to learn, including from the experiences of others. To this end, in January and February, we met with other organizations active in Rwanda, seeking to build relationships and synergies. In the coming months, we will build on these experiences and keep you informed of our progress.

One of the planned initiatives is the construction of a **small library** within the training center's premises. This library will primarily serve the local children and young people and is also being created thanks to contributions from friends, in loving

memory of Marta. We hope to open the library during the coming summer.

Also under consideration is the creation of a social cooperative, or other structures capable of providing an outlet for the tailoring and handicraft training activities and ensuring the sustainability and autonomy of the initiatives.

For all of this, in addition to the generosity of our supporters, it is necessary for the project to grow structurally. A significant moment of the recent mission was the meeting with the Bishop of the Diocese of Ruhengeri, His Lordship Vincent Harolimana, who received the description of our activities with keen interest and assured the Diocese's support in the continuation of our journey. We are grateful to the Bishop for his welcome and for his words of encouragement..



Meeting H.L. Mons. Harolimana, Father Fabien Hagenimana and Father Regis Bagerageza (Busengo Parish priest)

Donations and 5x1000


Our association sustains its work through membership dues, the generous donations of friends and parishioners, and by securing grants for solidarity projects. All of our activities are carried out by volunteers, ensuring that **100% of your donations directly benefit those we serve**.

You can find information on how to make a donation (including online) on our website: <https://www.porticosangiuseppe.it/donazioni/>.

Depending on your country's fiscal regulations, donation may be tax deductible.

If you are an Italian taxpayer, in addition to the possibility of tax-deductible donations, a simple and impactful way to support our initiatives is by allocating your "5 per mille" during your income tax declaration. Just enter our tax code **91412410374** on your Certificazione Unica, Modello 730, or Modello Redditi Persone Fisiche (formerly Unico). This choice **costs you nothing extra**; it simply directs a portion of the your taxes – the 0.5% which is already earmarked for social or cultural causes – to our work.

It's a cost-free action, yet absolutely key to the continuation of our work.

Dona il tuo **5x1000** 
C.F. **91412410374** San Giuseppe

Rwanda: a firsthand testimony

We cannot, however, conclude this brief account without mentioning the escalating crisis on Rwanda's northwestern border with the Democratic Republic of Congo, specifically in the North Kivu region. Goma, the epicenter of the initial and most violent clashes, lies just 60 km from Busengo. This conflict, with fluctuating intensity, has persisted for decades, involving multiple African nations and numerous opposing armed factions. While this is not the space to explore its intricate historical origins, this war, like all wars, will inflict its gravest and most enduring consequences on the poorest people on both sides.

Therefore, debating the rights and wrongs is less important, as neither side belongs to the vulnerable communities we serve. We reached out for a firsthand account from our friend, Father Fabien Hagenimana, a respected Rwandan intellectual and academic, a founding member and former rector of the INES-Ruhengeri University of Applied Sciences. He currently leads the "Vierge des Pauvres" Foyer de Charité in Remera-Ruhondo.

His heartfelt words follow below.



Rwanda and sanctions: which fate for the poor people?

The conflicts in Eastern DR Congo has been a headache for the people of the great lakes region. The war has taken human lives among the people, internal displacements and hard living conditions, soldiers from both sides of the belligerents have lost lives but mostly the economic situation of countries and families has been brought to the lowest level if not completely destroyed. It is right that what humanity has learned from history is not it has not learned anything from history. Despite the apparent victories, people have not yet realized that the war has no winner. Arms industries are prospering at the cost of human lives and people's miseries. Young people who do not know each other and do not master the root causes of the conflict are fighting and killing each other while the leaders who know each other and know why they are conflicting do not kill each other.

Unfortunately, the conflict which seems to be local, has a multitude of invisible hands at play. Despite passionate political and social justifications, the scramble for natural resources, most especially the rare minerals for the modern industry, is the unspoken devil behind people's blood outpouring and miserable life conditions.

The international community at both regional and global, is following, not without interest, the development of the conflict. Efforts to find a sustainable solution are often jeopardized by the conflict of interest at regional and international level. Some of the solutions to stop or slow down the conflict include sanctions against people or countries. In this context, some high ranked Rwandan personalities have been sanctioned but also the country has been hit by sanctions from Western countries. These sanctions include among others, suspension of cooperation and related funding. This has of course a big impact on the country's economy.

Already the resolution of the American government to withdraw USAID activities has left many without jobs and institutions which were supported have closed their doors or reduced their activities to the minimum. As if it was not enough, recently some international cooperation activities have also stopped in line with the sanctions against Rwanda because of its alleged support to M23/AFC.

At the national level, the inflow of foreign currencies has reduced with risk to boost the already galloping inflation. At individual and family levels, the people who lost their jobs and many others who depend on them, life has become rather complicated. It is indeed a pity that sanctions are used to push the leaders to go to the negotiation table, but the poor people are the ones who suffer the most.

This is where sanctions should not ignore the fate of the lower income and poor people who are the first victims without necessarily having a say on the fate of the conflict. It does not look reasonable to penalize the poor in the name of sanctions. Of recent, the president of Rwanda indicated that soon the economic situation will not be sound and he invited people to get ready for a very hard time. One can understand that those whose situation was already at the lowest level may even risk their lives.

More than ever, this is not the time to abandon them but to do something for their survival.