



LES ARCHES

Disability: a life together

Disability is always different, depending on the type of handicap one has and the country in which one lives.

There has been much progress and it is still continuing from a scientific point of view and in terms of inclusive policies and barriers that have been demolished. What has not gone away is the pain of the more severe forms and if one lives with this type of disability in a hostile country, that is poor and is developing slowly, this pain does not diminish but on the contrary, it makes one's problems worse.

THE FAI'S SUPPORT:

This is why a few years ago the FAI started supporting the message and the communities set up by **Jean Vanier**, a Canadian philosopher and philanthropist who, in **1964**, founded "**L'Arche**" and "**Foi et Lumière**", for people with disabilities. .

There are over **140 Arche communities** in more than **30 countries**. In these communities people with severe and mainly intellectual disabilities live as in a family and the same way as the other people who have chosen to live in the community to assist them. These places testify to the possibility of renewal and human transformation.

The FAI has supported the L'Arche communities in various and progressive ways since 2009. It helped the community of Al Fulk, in **Egypt** and then in 2017 it supported **the opening of a second community in Alexandria**.

In **Kenya**, the St. Martin Community Trust wanted to have and therefore set up the L'Arche community and in fact there are **two residential communities, Effatha and Betania**, which the FAI supported during their first years of activity.

In **Palestine**, the Bethlehem communities stand out as non-residential, day-time, highly productive communities. In **Ma'an lil-Hayat** and in the new Dar Salah centre the people work with wool, which is often bought from Bedouin families of the people living in the communities. What they make is sold throughout the world and they make a good profit.

These are **communities with a proactive and inclusive attitude** to the area around them and they always go the extra mile. The core members from the Bethlehem communities go to the oncology department of the state hospital as volunteers, bringing relief and smiles to the patients who are waiting for chemotherapy.

This is how **the message of the founder Jean Vanier** is kept alive. It invites us to cultivate sincere openness to the wishes of other people, to be aware of the beauty that comes from ordinary things, to support other people in a constructive way and to concentrate on "being with", being physically close to the people who are in the greatest difficulty.

For the future, we are planning on continuing to support L'Arche communities, maybe the ones in countries that are exacerbated by war, or by deep socio-economic inequality. We are thinking of **Syria**, where the community still exists despite years of conflict, and needs us to respond to their call.