

Fundación Vicente Ferrer

PRESS DOSSIER

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What is the Vicente Ferrer Foundation?

The Vicente Ferrer Foundation (Fundación Vicente Ferrer - FVF) is a Development non-governmental organisation (an NGDO) committed to the process of transforming one of the poorest and neediest areas in India, Anantapur, and one of the poorest and most excluded communities within the Hindu caste, the Dalits (untouchables) and the tribal groups. Its founder, Vicente Ferrer, has spent more than 50 years working in India with the underprivileged.

Humanism and Action

The FVF is a humanist organisation founded on the philosophy of action. Its way of understanding development has produced an exemplary model in the field of International Cooperation. Due to his way of thinking and acting, Vicente Ferrer has been capable of stirring the conscience of thousands of people in the fight to eradicate inequalities among people, transmitting his commitment and enthusiasm to thousands of people who, day after day, work and collaborate for the same cause in India and in Spain.

Two work-teams

The FVF is made up of two teams: a Spanish team and an Indian team who work together to eradicate poverty and social inequalities in Anantapur. Indians and Spaniards are the lead players in the economic, social and cultural development which is emerging in the area. Without the effort and commitment shown by one and the other, these changes would not be possible. Between all of us, we are succeeding in transforming society into humanity.

A social agent in India

In India, the Rural Development Trust, RDT, founded by Vicente Ferrer in 1969, works as a social body, respecting the environment and is a major figure in the transformation process, with a final objective: the development of the community. RDT does not seek immediate solutions, but continuity in time and an unlimited permanence in the same area.

2,500,000 beneficiaries

Vicente Ferrer's leadership capacity and his humanitarian action philosophy have produced extraordinary results.

At this moment in time, FVF-RDT's work covers a surface area of 13,000 km², in 1,500 villages, and benefits 2,500,000 people.

Six Project-areas

To initiate changes which bring about long-term solutions and contribute to eradicating poverty, active work is needed on the people's living conditions in the following areas: Education, Housing, Women, Health, Ecology and the Disabled.

A strong social base in Spain

In the year 2006, more than 130,000 sponsors and supporters in Spain had provided 83,33% of the financial resources which enable the development of FVF's projects. Thanks to them, the FVF can continue its work so that the transformation process begun in Anantapur, can still advance on other fronts, and can favour a change in the life of poor communities which still go unattended.

A committed management

In Spain, a committed, enthusiastic, credible and serious management firmly reflects how the Fundación Vicente Ferrer acts. In the year 2005, 92,08% of its income was designated to the Development Programme in Anantapur, whilst 4,12% was destined to Administration expenses.

A life that does not go by unnoticed

Vicente Ferrer has always tended to shy away from personal honours and recognitions, but he has been grateful for each and every one of the different distinctions he has received throughout his life, because he recognises that they signify a contribution to social awareness.

Many, very important institutions and entities have wished to honour his person by distinguishing him, among other recognitions, with the *Premio Príncipe de Asturias a la Concordia*, in 1998; *Español Universal*, in 1998, *Miembro de la Comisión de Erradicación de la Pobreza*, from the Government of Andhra Pradesh, in 2000; *Creu de St Jordi*, from the Generalitat of Catalunya, in 2000; *Premio Derechos Humanos del Consejo General de la Abogacía Española*, in 2000; *Personaje destacado de la historia del siglo XX by UNESCO*, in 2001; *Gran Cruz de la Orden Civil de la Solidaridad*, from the Spanish Ministry of Work and Social Affairs, in 2002; *Premio al Espíritu Olímpico*, from the Spanish Olympic Committee, in 2002; *Doctor Honoris Causa*, from the Polytechnic University of Valencia and the University of Huelva.



ANANTAPUR DISTRICT

Extension
19.130 km²

Population aprox.
4 million

Beneficiaries
2,5 million

WHO WE ARE

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The FVF is a humanist organisation founded on the philosophy of action. Its founder, Vicente Ferrer, has been working for more than 50 years in India with the underprivileged. His way of understanding development has created an exemplary model in the field of International Cooperation. Due to his way of thinking and acting, Vicente Ferrer has been capable of stirring the conscience of thousands of people in the fight to eradicate inequalities among people, transmitting his commitment and enthusiasm to thousands of people who, day after day, work and collaborate for the same cause in India and in Spain.

The FVF is made up of two teams: a Spanish team and an Indian team who work together to eradicate poverty and social inequalities in Anantapur. Indians and Spaniards are the lead players in the economic, social and cultural development which is emerging in the area. Without the effort and commitment shown by one and the other, these changes would not be possible. Between all of us, we are succeeding in transforming society into humanity.

In India, the Rural Development Trust, RDT, works as a social body, respecting the environment and is the leading player in a transformation process with one final objective: the development of the community. RDT does not seek immediate solutions, but continuity in time and an unlimited permanence in the same area.

In Spain, the Fundación Vicente Ferrer is characterised by its very own way of working through a wide network of offices and representatives. Committed, enthusiastic, credible and serious management firmly reflects how the Fundación Vicente Ferrer acts.

At this moment in time, the Fundación Vicente Ferrer is supported by more than 130,000 collaborators in Spain which provide specific and constant support for RDT's work in India, thus guaranteeing its independence and continuity so that the most underprivileged and poorest people in Anantapur can break free from the social marginalisation in which they live, and raising the Spanish public's awareness regarding the possibility of transforming the Anantapur area.

When Vicente Ferrer arrived in Anantapur, the prospects of the area's inhabitants were bleak. With the aim of finding solutions to Anantapur's rural community's multiple problems, he founded the Rural Development Trust, RDT in 1969. It was formed by a local team, and with the support of several humanitarian organisations. For thirty years RDT has succeeded in improving the living conditions of the *Dalits* and the tribal groups through its extensive programme of integrated development.

In India, RDT manages the most innovating and revolutionary programme of humanitarian aid in the history of India.

- We seek long term solutions.
- We are dedicated to continuity in time and in the area.
- We adapt ourselves to the specific needs of the people.
- We respect the place's culture and customs.

Today RDT is an organisation:

- ▶ which has a practical essence, based on the philosophy which Vicente Ferrer has known how to transmit,
- ▶ formed by 1,200 people, of which more than 100 are sectorial leaders,
- ▶ with professional committed to their work (99% of the team are from Anantapur),
- ▶ which reaches 1,800 villages, organised in groups of 50 and attended by specialised groups in each area,
- ▶ equipped and prepared to deal with emergency and development programmes in different fields,
- ▶ which has achieved a relationship based on trust and complicity with the area's communities, thanks to a Project which prepares, teaches and helps specialise the community's members so that they can improve their living conditions and become self-sufficient.

THE REVOLUTION OF THE DALITS

In India, the society is organised around a rigid system of castes and sub-castes, in which each one occupies a specific place in the social structure, with its own personal behaviour, rules of conduct and beliefs, but always within the general principles of Hinduism.

It is a hierarchical system which has existed forever, even though, nowadays, the Indian Constitution has abolished castes. In reality, castes have not disappeared because they have been maintained in the same way for centuries and centuries.

There is one group considered caste-less: the Dalits or untouchables, which have been historically condemned to carry out the most servile and humiliating jobs in the society. In rural India, the Dalits represent a marginalised community: their work as labourers, extremely low-paid and irregular, prevents them from having access to dignified living conditions. In this context, RDT continues to work so that the Dalits can take charge of their own destiny and recover their dignity. For the very first time, the Dalits know that there is someone working by their side.

ACTION AREAS

RDT's working methodology is based on the active participation of all the community in different areas: thus the beneficiaries of this help are the true managers and executors of the different projects, and, therefore, its leading players.

The Foundation works to consolidate communities capable of mutually giving support and trust, thanks to a dynamic, creative organisation which is constantly striving to take part in all of the development goals. In addition, the area where it works continues to grow and, there are more and more people who benefit from this project.

Housing: A decent home for every family.

The Housing Area was one of the first sectors developed by the RDT as the communities it works with, due to their scarce economic resources and their social marginalisation, are forced to live in poor huts grouped in colonies separated from the higher castes and far from public services which are sometimes provided by the local government (wells, latrines, schools, dispensaries, etc.)

The colonies of houses built have minimum sanitary conditions, and act as an effective shelter against the torrential rains and the intense heat and, above all, they provide a feeling of dignity for a deeply discriminated community.

Health: A health network within everyone's reach.

The Health Area aims to improve the expectations and quality of life of Anapapur's population through prevention and Health Education, and by building facilities which guarantee adequate hygiene conditions.

Since the start of this Programme, supplementary food centres have been built which currently serve to educate the population on the prevention of malnutrition; thousands of local health agents have been trained and are prepared to treat and advise on matters of prevention and primary care which are highly effective and extremely useful; four General Hospitals have been built as referral centres for the primary care network together with a Family Planning Centre in addition to wells, water channels and other installations to prevent infections.

Education: Yesterday, children without access to education. Today, teachers in their own community.

The Educational Area is one which receives special emphasis seeing that access to education is the corner-stone for the community's development.

The Education Programme began in 1978 with a campaign to raise the population's awareness regarding the importance of schooling and to motivate families to include their children in the school curriculum. But the children from the poorest communities found themselves with a problem - their lack of preparation alongside children from higher castes caused adaptation difficulties and failure at school. Therefore, a decision was taken to establish a network of complementary schools where students received the basis and support needed to follow up their studies in governmental schools, thus encouraging social integration.

Nowadays, the literacy rate in Andhra Pradesh is higher than the rest of the country.

The Disabled: Working for social integration.

As a result of an insufficient and unbalanced diet during pregnancy, the lack of hygiene during labour and inexistent safety measures together with very long working days, the rate of disabled people is particularly high among Anantapur's poorest rural population.

In 1987 a specific programme was set up for the disabled with the aim of finding a solution to the discrimination they suffer. In order to increase their mobility, orthopaedic and rehabilitation workshops were started to make artificial limbs, crutches and tricycles, as well as special centres for disabled children.

Alongside these, mutually supported disabled associations have been created and are managed by the members themselves who, thanks to a Common Fund, set up business or activities which enable them to become independent and, at the same time, reinforce their social integration.

Women: At the beginning, women sat in the last rows. Nowadays, they're leading the demonstrations.

The Women's Development Project began in 1982 to succeed in improving the traditional situation of marginalisation in which Indian women live although, in practice, they represent the pillar-stone of the family economy and are the main transmitter of values and customs.

To confront this situation, RDT designed a system based on the creation of the so-called *shangam* or Women's Associations. Through the Woman's Bank, the Foundation offers the initial financial resources needed to achieve financial independence. Using a start-up capital, the *shangam* develop their own credit system, enabling the group the possibility of benefiting from the advantages of saving together.

By means of the *shangams*, the women get awareness of their rights and recognition from society.

Ecology: Saving the Earth to save Mankind.

The Ecological Area was the first Project that RDT developed in Anantapur. When Vicente Ferrer arrived in Anantapur, the geologists predicted a progressive desertification in this area and advised the population's exodus in a maximum of 50 years. Due to this reason, in 1969, RDT, with the help of other organisations, began a long-term ecological development plan which covers different fields:

- ▶ Stem the erosion and disappearance of the fertile layer, stopping the dragging-effect of torrential waters and increasing harvest yields.
- ▶ Build irrigation-structures to store rainwater and thus enabling the irrigation of the fields of crops during the dry season.
- ▶ Reforest the area to maintain the climatic balance and stop the erosion phenomenon.
- ▶ Create plant nurseries to avoid the risk of families' losing crops during the graft's vulnerable phase
- ▶ Create ecological, biogas plants by taking advantage of the livestock's manure.
- ▶ Dig wells to extract water destined for domestic use.

WAYS TO HELP

The Fundación Vicente Ferrer wants to carry on working so that the transformation process that has begun in Anantapur continues to advance on all fronts and to make a change in the life of the poorest who have still not received help. That's why it's essential to increase our number of supporters who believe in people, in their capability to act and in their possibilities to change.

Sponsorship

The "Sponsorship" commitment

When people sponsor, they have the chance to understand the real value of their help through the life of a child and his family.

The monthly gift made by each sponsor is not directly assigned to the sponsored child, as his progress cannot be isolated, but it is directly linked to his family's progress and that of the other families which make up his community, creating a total balance. "Sponsorship" signifies creating a link with Anantapur's Dalit community, helping in its development, in its transformation process.

All the families from the villages which take part in the project freely benefit from medical aid, education on hygiene, vaccinations and preventive medicine. In addition, they have the possibility to access all the organisation's activities aimed at economic and social development, such as the construction of homes, credit systems for small businesses or plantations, work in different farming and ecological projects, work in craft workshops, etc.

Supporters

An extraordinary way to help

Supporters of the Vicente Ferrer Foundation are linked to the integral development programme which is underway in Anantapur, joining their efforts with the area's rural population to eradicate poverty and social inequality.

Supporters can choose between making a contribution to the general fund for the set of projects, or they can send their gift exclusively to a specific area (education, health, women, ecology, disabled or housing).

Whatever their choice, their gift will contribute to achieving economic, social and cultural development in the rural community of Anantapur.

Supporters can choose the amount and the frequency of their donations. They receive information on the evolution of the programme and the benefits shared by all the population.

From Woman to Woman

A Savings Programme

People who wish to help change the situation of women in India can do so through the Project "From Woman to Woman". Each person makes a commitment to help an Indian woman by giving 6 Euros a month over a five year period.

The Project "From Woman to Woman" is a savings programme aimed at women in the rural areas of Anantapur to help them become valued and respected in their

community and to acquire a level of economic independence which will enable them to be the major figures in their social and economic changes. As a supporter, you receive a photo of the group of women you are helping and a yearly letter with information on the activity in which these women are working.

Financing or co-financing of specific projects

The possibility of sending a one-off donation to help finance a specific Project is another way to help and is chosen by private individuals, administrations, entities and companies. Any person or institution that finances a project can travel to India to see the Project, and even inaugurate it, once it has been implemented.

THE PROGRAMME IN FIGURES

Vicente Ferrer's leadership capacity and his humanist philosophy on action have produced extraordinary results.

Nowadays, the work of FVF-RDT covers a surface area of 13,000 km², in 1,800 villages, and benefits 2,500,000 people.

Education as a base for development

In 1978 Vicente Ferrer began to promote supplementary schools in every village, teaching the Governmental School curriculum, so that children can later access secondary public boarding schools.

- ▶ Schools: 1.600
- ▶ Teachers: 2.067
- ▶ Primary students: 94.891
- ▶ Secondary students: 48.974

Achieving fertile land

This ecology programme covers the conservation of soil to stem erosion, the creation of irrigation structures, reforestation, the use of alternative energies and family horticulture.

- ▶ Structures for the preservation of rainwater: 1.662 projects
- ▶ Reforestation: 2.995.484 trees planted
- ▶ Horticulture: 1.463.096 fruit trees planted
- ▶ Permanent Drought Fund: 44.718 target group

A home for every family

Vicente's work in this field has been focussed on the repair of existing homes and the building of housing colonies which meet the necessary health conditions.

- ▶ Homes built (1997-2005): 15.606
- ▶ Homes for the disabled (1997-2005): 599

A Health System within everyone's reach

In addition to the specialised hospitals, there currently exists a wide, rural health network formed by doctors, nurses and health workers who provide primary aid in the villages and act as a link with the hospitals.

- ▶ Specialised hospitals: 4
- ▶ Family Planning Centre: 1
- ▶ Network of dispensaries covering the whole area.

Women: the pillarstone of society

In 1982, Vicente designed a system based on the creation of associations of women (shangams), whose aim is to become aware of their rights as active members of the community, promoting their economic independence.

- ▶ Women Associations: 3.420
- ▶ Associated women: 46.380
- ▶ Villages with a "Woman's Bank": 902

Social-working integration for the Disabled

In 1987, a specific programme for the Disabled was launched, which aims for social integration through integration in the labour market, trying to organise a future economic independence with them and for them.

- ▶ Disabled people beneficiaries of the RDT programme: 19.562
- ▶ Residences for disabled children: 16
- ▶ Associations (shangams): 1.082
- ▶ Members: 13.470

THE FOUNDATION'S ECONOMIC RESOURCES

Origin of 2005 resources

Private	83,33 %
Public	16,67%

Distribution of 2005 resources

Projects in India	38.678.782,11 €	92,08%
Administration	1.729.146,66 €	4,12%
Fundraising	1.595.584,37 €	3,80 %
Total	42.003.513,14 €	100 %

VICENTE FERRER' s BIOGRAPHY

Vicente Ferrer was born in Barcelona (Spain) on April 9th, 1920 and he spent his childhood years between Barcelona and Gandía. Civil war broke out in 1936 and Vicente was called to the Republican front when he was just sixteen years old.

When the War ended he began to study Law, but firmly decided to discover the way to follow his vocation: helping others (the poor, the excluded, the sick...).

The "Compañía de Jesús" (Jesuit) appealed to him due to its image of heroism, wisdom, great ideals and its fight for a better world. Firm in his commitment to faithfully fulfilling his principles, Vicente abandoned his studies and joined the Order.

His actions bear their first fruits 1952-1968

On February 13, 1952, Vicente Ferrer arrived in Mumbai as a Jesuit missionary.

Despite his goal being to finish his spiritual training, during his first mission in Manmad, he decided to go out and meet the people, learn about their needs and gain their trust, trying to find a solution to the suffering of the poorest. In order to do so, he set up a singular work system among the agricultural labourers which stirred their awareness and generated a great movement of solidarity. "The miracle of giving" consisted in providing a small amount of financial aid and the necessary technical advice to obtain water for the crops. If, after finishing, every labourer returned the loan (without interests), the miracle began to spread amongst all the community.

From the start, he put into practice several procedures such as organising small cooperatives to dig wells, channels for water supply, seed banks, small irrigation plots, etc.

At the same time, Vicente worked in the construction of community services and, thanks to the cession of some land, he erected two schools, a hospital and two hostels to provide residence for the students who now numbered almost a thousand.

Difficult times 1968-1969

The sympathy that Vicente Ferrer's work awakened among the peasants generated suspicions among some leaders, who saw him as a threat to their own interests.

The publication of an article in the *Illustrated Weekly*, the widest-read weekly in India, titled "The Silent Revolution" triggered the expulsion order which he received on April 27, 1968, giving him 30 days to leave the country.

As a result of this, a peasant movement was begun in favour of Vicente Ferrer, a group of intellectuals, politicians and religious leaders also joined their voices. The coordinator of this Defence Committee was Madu Metha, one of the most active and influential social leaders in Bombay. With just two days to go until the deadline of his expulsion, more than 30,000 peasants walked the 250 kms. that separate Manmad from Mumbai to demand justice from the Government.

During a short interview with Vicente, the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, recognised the enormous value of his work and promised to find the best solution to the situation, sending a telegramme with a Solomonic message: "Father Vicente Ferrer will go abroad for a brief holiday and will be, once again, welcomed back to India".

Vicente returned to Spain and founded *Acción Fraternal en el Mundo (Fraternal Action in the World)*, with one sole objective: to alleviate the situation of two thirds of humanity suffering from hunger.

He also found time to mediate in the cause of two Goans, sentenced to life in Lisbon prisons, and he achieved their release two months later.

At this time, a 12-page article was published in the American magazine *Life*, titled "The Saint of Manmad", whilst in Spain, Italy, Germany, India and North America a popular movement collected 25,000 signatures with the aim of nominating Vicente as candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Despite having applied for it, the permit allowing him to return had still not arrived three months after leaving India. Surprised by the delay, it was Indira Gandhi herself who ordered the entry visa to be issued immediately.

Anantapur: The definitive adventure. 1969-2003

Upon his return to India, the State of Andhra Pradesh was the only one to welcome him, and Vicente, together with six unconditional volunteers decided to settle in that region's poorest land: Anantapur, where the shortage of water almost breached on desertification, and health and education were practically inexistent. There, the radical politicians joined together to receive him with messages painted on walls saying: "Ferrer go back". Far from being frightened, three days after arriving, he already had a house, empty and only half-built, which would be converted into the headquarters. A poster hung from one of the bare walls saying: "Wait for a miracle". This prophetic message, whose origin remains unknown, represented a new meaning to keep going forward.

In March, 1970, he left the Order of the Compañía de Jesús. And that same year he married Anne Perry, an English journalist who had remained at his side since the Manmad conflict.

The Rural Development Trust (RDT) was born within this context. The organisation, under Vicente's leadership, contributed to the development of the District of Anantapur.

However, during the seventies, the harassment was constant, this time from the region's authorities who looked on his work with suspicion and even tried to imprison him. Vicente reported the abuse of power which he was suffering and achieved a favourable ruling which created jurisprudence.

In 1996, he created the Fundación Vicente Ferrer in Spain to assure the project's financial continuity.

A life that hasn't gone by unnoticed

There have been many, very relevant institutions and entities that have wished to honour Vicente Ferrer by distinguishing him, among other recognitions, with:

- ▶ Premio Príncipe de Asturias a la Concordia (Prince of Asturias Prize to Harmony), in 1998.
- ▶ Español Universal, in 1998.
- ▶ Miembro de la Comisión de Erradicación de la Pobreza, the Andhra Pradesh Government, in 2000
- ▶ Creu de St Jordi (St. George's Cross), from the Generalitat of Catalunya, in 2000.
- ▶ Premio Derechos Humanos (Prize for Human Rights) from the General Board of the Spanish Legal Profession, in 2000.
- ▶ Personaje destacado de la historia del siglo XX (Most outstanding person in the history of the XX Century) by the UNESCO, in 2001.
- ▶ Gran Cruz de la Orden Civil de la Solidaridad, (Great Cross of the Civil Order for Solidarity) from the Spanish Ministry of Work and Social Affairs, in 2002.
- ▶ Premio al Espíritu Olímpico, from the Spanish Olympic Committee, in 2002.
- ▶ Doctor Honoris Causa, from the Polytechnic University of Valencia and the University of Huelva.

Quotations

"I've declared war on pain and suffering and I've signed a commitment to peace: to contribute to unity between nations and people."

"I've found the greatest richness in the most extreme poverty, in the most naked humanity."

"Education is the first step of development, the means needed to transform society and free it from ignorance."

"Misery and suffering are not meant to be understood, but to be solved."

"I'm quite sure that no good deed is lost in this world. In some place, it will remain forever."

“The West has an apocalyptic responsibility. The Governments must realise that it’s up to them to carry out heroic acts and make very brave political decisions to solve the problem of poverty.”

“Why do I need to search for the truth if any good deed in favour of others in itself contains every philosophy, every religion, the whole universe and God himself?”

“History is a process of millions of years in which society aspires to become itself in humanity.”

“Life’s adventure consists in being present in the History, be it small or big, of Humanity.”

“Should we wait for the salvation of humanity to come from the hands of governments and the major international institutions? It’s true that they have an important part of responsibility, but, increasingly, we should accept our own.”

Fundación Vicente Ferrer

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