

**Aspirations of the
3rd LEAD Mission Assembly**

On 17 to 18 September and 08 October 2022, sixty-nine (69) Brothers and lay partners from across the seven countries of the Lasallian East Asia District gathered virtually for the **3rd LEAD Mission Assembly**. The objective of the gathering was to craft the District's response to the pathways proposed by the Institute's 46th General Chapter. The Transformation Pathways and their related commitments were organized under three (3) main themes that were identified as vital discussion points for the gathering: *Mission, Formation, and Renewed Structures*.

Preparations for this discernment process took a year. The Organizing Committee of the Assembly began preparations in September 2021. By November of last year, the different Sectors came together for their respective Country Conversations, which reflected on the results of the previous Mission Assembly. The realities that emerged from each country during these conversations also figured in the current Mission Assembly.

As the Assembly begun, Brother Superior General Br. Armin A. Luistro FSC challenged the participants to express gratitude for the unique context of LEAD; surrender to divine providence as the work of finding new ways to look after those entrusted to our care carries on; and ask where our brothers and sisters are, ensuring that Lasallians in East Asia will continue to be there for them. Equipped with these invitations and the distinct experience of LEAD from the past four years, participants of the Assembly broke out into discussion circles to give particular attention to the General Chapter resolutions and come up with rooted and contextualized proposals for the Lasallian mission in East Asia. It should be noted that resolutions that needed attention particularly from the Brothers or the Superior General and his Council were intentionally omitted from the conversations.

Together and by association, the participants of the 3rd LEAD Mission Assembly share with Lasallians in East Asia the following aspirations.

I Mission

Transformation Pathways 1.1 and 5.3.2a-b

Societal injustices remain rampant in various parts of the world, and a culture of impunity has now become commonplace. The disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic have also made education for social justice less effective. LEAD is not exempt from this reality. Now, more than ever, the invitation to seek our brothers and sisters and care for the last, lost, and least in society is relevant.

1. Solidarity and Care for the World Through Education

To address this, the District can create a formal structure as much as possible that will be responsible for organizing as well as sustaining conversations focused on ongoing conflicts and injustices in the different countries in LEAD and educating for justice. This structure can also develop a common framework or guideline on Educating for Justice at the District-level which each sector can contextualize to their experiences.

There is also consensus to strengthen the formation of young Lasallians on the theme of social justice so that they will be empowered to address real world social problems and different forms of poverty. A data-driven approach in localizing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals must also be utilized. Different schools in LEAD have already started to move towards this, such as the Values-in-Action Projects of Singapore and Hong Kong, Singapore's Project Good (Gift of One Dollar), as well as Malaysia's SXI Charity Drive among others. Such activities can be replicated by other countries, as well as implement new programs that are focused on human rights advocacies, mindful that political aspects may need to be considered in some countries as it can lead to issues for schools and teachers.

2. Implementation of Service Learning, Experience-based Learning, and Immersion Programs

There is strong motivation in LEAD to respond to the real needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups and ensure that service and mission projects achieve impact and empower communities to become self-sufficient. As a response, the District must design and implement service learning, experience-based learning, and immersion programs across its seven countries. The LEAD Volunteer Engagement Network (LEAVEN) may be established to provide structures that will support volunteer initiatives, opportunities, and engagements. This can be achieved if a pool of volunteers (young Lasallians, lay partners, and Brothers) who will be involved in short-term and programmatic borderless engagements will be developed. A menu of possible site of ministry (e.g., Bamboo School in Thailand, Asrama Butitin in Malaysia, Bahay Pag-asa in the Philippines) will have to be

identified, corresponding experienced-based learning and immersion programs need to be implemented, and a Social Development Fund (SDF) to financially support these efforts needs to be established as part of the District Mission Fund.

Transformation Pathway 4.1

3. Ensuring that Lasallian Institutions are Safe Spaces¹ for Minors and Vulnerable Adults

At present, public perception of Lasallian schools is that they are less inclusive. With consideration to this reality, the District must make efforts to align Lasallian education with the seven commitments for the Global Compact on Education, develop critical citizenship and civic responsibility for the promotion of common good, and particularly be more inclusive of minorities in terms of religion, race, gender, political belief, ability (including special education needs or SEN), economic status, etc. What is proposed is to revisit existing programs and policies, and formulate common Guiding Principles that will ensure that Lasallian Institutions are safe spaces physically and digitally for the protection of minors and vulnerable adults (i.e., working undergraduate students, and out-of-school youth). Separate policies for minors and vulnerable adults should be formulated. This can be achieved if best implementation practices are documented in brochures, websites, and other publication materials; if LEAD champions/ambassadors including alumni and students will be identified to coordinate the formulation of policies, and provide financial and human resources to support the implementation at the District level.

Transformation Pathway 4.3

4. Support for Integral Ecology Projects

There have been few and sporadic projects in LEAD that cater to the protection of the planet. There is a push, therefore, for the District to proactively support the development of integral ecology projects not just from its countries, but also in East Asia in general and even the greater Pacific Asia region. The proposal is to implement service-learning experience in school-based curriculum as well as co-curricular and extra-curricular programs of Lasallian schools in LEAD if possible, considering relevant policies and procedures, in order to implement integral ecology projects systematically and institutionally, including, but not limited to the following:

- a. ensuring the availability of safe water;
- b. eventual elimination of single use plastics;
- c. promotion of the installation of solar panels in school (ex: Singaporean schools' self-audit on the use of energy);
- d. tree planting (ex: Philippines' One Million Trees and Beyond Project);

¹ In the Oxford Dictionary, the term safe space generally means “a place or environment in which a person or category of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment or any other emotional or physical harm.”

- e. replication of the Lasallian Institute for the Environment; LIFE champions in each LEAD school; and
- f. promotion of Catholic social investments in green energy; discourage support to industries that threaten the environment such as coal mining.

II

Formation

Transformation Pathways 2.1, 5.2.b-d, and 5.4

At present, there are few District-wide opportunities for formation and renewal in LEAD. They are often piecemeal and without consistency. Nevertheless, each Sector has a breadth of available formation for Brothers and Lasallian partners within their borders. These experiences cater to Lasallians of varied level of commitments and tenure in the mission.

5. Development of a District Formation Resource Platform

As an effort towards deepening and sharing Lasallian Spirituality beyond our own borders, we aspire for a centralized, dedicated, and well-managed online platform that contains updated tools and materials on Lasallian identity and charism collected from across the District that can be used to provide opportunities for quality and sustainable formation experiences to all Lasallians. The success of this online formation resource center will be ensured if the District will regularly manage and curate materials coming from each country, and if they will promote and use the proposed platform.

6. Contextualization of The Pilgrim's Handbook

In response to the call of the 46th General Chapter and the proposals of the III AIMEL on Partnership for Mission, we also hope that will be able to contextualize the *Lasallian Formation for Mission: The Pilgrim's Handbook* in our District—to develop a common LEAD formation plan for Lasallians (considering additional inputs specific to the Brothers) at different stages of their involvement (i.e., students, teachers, administrators, alumni, etc.) to the Lasallian mission. This ensures that District-wide initial and continuing formation experiences suited to the multicultural and multireligious reality of LEAD will be made available to all. Such encounters should have a service immersion component and be complemented by accompaniment with seasoned Brothers and fellow Lasallian partners.

To start, a study on the current (in the next three to six months) involvement of lay partners must be conducted. The District should regularly assess the development of association moving forward. When in place, each Sector will adopt the LEAD formation plan, share financial and human resources with one another, leverage technology to widen the scope and reach of formation opportunities, and actively collaborate with the District leadership to ensure success in this effort.

7. Fostering a Culture of Vocations

It is a reality across the Institute that there is a dwindling and ageing number of Brothers. There are even countries in LEAD with little to no vocations. However unfortunate, it serves as impetus to foster a Culture of Vocation in our ministries—not just for young men to consider the religious life but also for lay partners to fully imbibe the Lasallian charism and commit to the work entrusted to our care.

Toward this end, the continuation and strengthening of vocations promotion across the District is a necessary endeavor. Despite the current number of the Brothers, LEAD still boasts of a number of seasoned formators, both religious and lay. The suggestion is to capitalize on this by forming (or empowering, if already present) a District Vocations Team that can visit the various countries of LEAD—especially those with less vocations—and coordinate with their respective local vocations teams, which should include formation programs for lay partners. Strengthening formation programs for Brothers, teachers, and staff in schools, committed Lasallians, as well as those working full-time for the Lasallian family and the mission. Clear communication plans on vocations promotion that can readily be accessed by each country should also be ensured by the District. This way, efforts towards the promotion of vocations are structured and efficiently makes use of the District’s capable human resources.

Given present-day realities, there is recognition that innovative ways to accompany Brothers in their vocation journeys are essential. Some methods used in the past may not necessarily be effective approaches today. All have skills and talents that can be shared with others. The District can revive its program for our young and senior Brothers to share teachable moments with each other and bridge the age gap between them. Ample preparations are also necessary when sending Brothers to ministries out of their home countries. Time and energy are needed for young Brothers to be acclimatized to the culture and language that are new to them. More opportunities to immerse and serve the last, lost, and least should also be made available for both Brothers and lay partners in LEAD. Leveraging technology may be considered in all these efforts.

These efforts hopefully translate to a stronger culture of vocations in LEAD: more lay partners who view the education of young people not as work but as a vocation; more Brothers produced and persevering in our District; and the viability and vitality of the Lasallian mission in LEAD.

III

Renewed Structures

Transformation Pathways 3.2 and 5.2a

8. Creating a MEL² Assembly and Council

The 2nd LEAD Mission Assembly proposed the establishment of local mission councils that can provide direction to the mission work in each Sector. Said proposal was then adopted and passed by 3rd LEAD Chapter, which led to the creation of the LEAD Mission Council in 2020. Despite this, there is yearning for a formal governance structure that promotes co-responsibility and solidarity, if they do not exist, so that the mission is sustained and is able to attract all Lasallian to participate and serve, ensuring its vitality, growth, and development.

In view of this, current aspirations include the creation of a MEL Council and MEL Assembly in LEAD, if none exist—a strategic body composed of Brothers and lay partners, which will focus on needy sectors, safeguarding Lasallian Identity and Mission. First, we must clearly define the purpose and role of the MEL Council. We also need to conduct an inventory of what structures may exist and develop a unified organization chart of associated Lasallian entities (i.e., school boards, local mission councils, alumni associations, youth groups, Signum Fidei, etc.) in LEAD. This will be followed by a review of what roles these structures play (whether advisory or executive). From there, the need and role of the proposed MEL Assembly and Council in LEAD can be ascertained, as directed by the 46th General Chapter and the District Council.

Transformation Pathway 7.1

9. Ensuring the Availability of Financial Resources

As already stated earlier, there are countries in LEAD with Brothers no longer active nor capable of exercising leadership roles. To prepare how the Mission will be sustained and to provide adequate support to retired Brothers, the need to generate and share resources, as well as create supporting structures and programs are required.

Toward this end, the aspiration is to (1) to establish a Solidarity Fund (a seed capital/fund for Mission) in LEAD and Endowment Fund for (retired) Brothers, if none exist; and (2) to establish Solidarity Fund and Endowment Fund for Brothers at each Sector, if none exist. This proposal will include the evaluation of the present situation, including an inventory of and status of financial resources of all countries, a needs assessment with the help of

² MEL is an acronym for Mission Educative Lasallienne in French, Misión Educativa Lasaliana in Spanish, and Lasallian Educational Mission in English.

the District and Sector Bursars in order to ensure efficient allocation, support the creation and consolidation of new educational works in service to the poor, to support the long-term vitality of the Lasallian mission and to support the care of sick and elderly Brothers in needy countries. LEAD and its member countries may also consider preserving and protecting its assets and engaging legal and taxation experts that can advise on any consequence that any action or adoption of a financial model may have.

Transformation Pathways 5.3.3a-b, 5.3.4a, 5.5, and 7.2

10. Efficient Use of Resources

There are a number of countries in the District that face significant human and financial challenges together with growing demands and needs, which require fraternal response through education and promotion of justice. The renovated structures for the future must ensure sustainability of the Lasallian mission.

In consideration to this, we aspire for the countries in LEAD to (1) to organize, following prevailing laws and regulations, entities (e.g. non-profit corporations or foundations) to manage their assets, separately for the Brothers and the mission (i.e. schools and institutions); (2) actively involve and appoint Brothers and lay partners who are committed to protect, safeguard, and sustain the mission to leadership roles; and (3) formulate and implement plans on how to protect assets and manage them when there are no longer Brothers in leadership and management positions.

At the level of the District, we hope to see the organization of structures that will encourage the sharing of human resources across the seven countries. At present an alumni network in LEAD has been established. Other groups that can be centralized under the LEAD Mission Council include, but are not limited to, young Lasallians, Lasallian educators, formators, volunteers and media and communication practitioners.

The proposed action plans and necessary support for this to succeed are: (1) to train, develop and empower Lasallian partners to take more leadership roles in the institute, including alumni with solid professional background (proven expertise and experience) and with strong Lasallian ethos; and (2) to segregate the assets into: (a) Patrimony (for Brothers' needs) and (b) Mission (for schools and institutions) and to set-up an organization and system on how to manage these assets – to record, protect and safeguard – in each sector; and (3) to formulate a transition plan to trusted partners and future-proof the assets in the eventuality when no Brothers can manage them in order to ensure the sustainability of the Lasallian mission.

11. Self-sufficiency of the Lasallian Mission in LEAD

At present, there are countries and educational institutions in the District with limited resources and facing significant needs, raising concerns of vitality and viability in fulfilling the mission.

To this end, we aspire (1) for the LEAD to prepare its own Feasibility Plan, with focus on the needs of each country and Brothers; and (2) for each Sector to formulate and submit Feasibility Plans (e.g. Vitality and Viability Plans) that considers the prevailing realities and contexts in their respective countries, consistent with Circular 460 *Towards Self-Sufficiency*. Our proposal is (1) to evaluate present situation and assess the needs per country; and (2) to institute a process of formulation, review, and monitoring of the Feasibility Plan.

The District and each country should also study developing new and relevant ministries. Often times our brothers and sisters are not always in the formal classroom setting. Apart from paying stakeholders, we should explore possibilities beyond our current school models and consider bringing the Lasallian brand of education to a wider scope. We should also be able to provide education and care to the needy segments of our society through informal education, technical and vocational education and training, and others.

Observations of the Listening & Writing Committee

Renewal of Institutions

The area that seemed to figure prominently in the Country Conversations but was not picked up at the Mission Assembly were various conversations on the Quality of Education in our established institutions. The context for this concern is the pandemic and the shift many schools had to make to implement online or remote learning. Much has been learned in the process and there remain untapped potentials for remote or online learning to broaden collaboration across Sectors; and make education more accessible.

The conversation around the renewal of our Institutions in the above context is relevant from the perspective of ensuring the continued vitality and viability of our Lasallian mission. Our capacity to adapt will be enhanced and greater operational efficiencies can be realized with the incorporation of digital technologies in the delivery of our educational services. Secondly, the conversation is equally relevant from the perspective of formation. The adoption of new technologies can be argued to necessitate the creation of a new mindset, new habits and new ways of engaging. These will have implications on the formation of our teachers and our students in such areas as responsible digital citizenship. The use of digital platforms can open a new reading of St. La Salle's thinking and legacy. As long as the effective integration of our students into society in a Christian spirit continues to be among our goals, their education in the relevant technologies will remain a concern for our educational communities. Finally, the conversation around Quality of Education is relevant when we consider the goal of building a more just and fraternal community of learners inasmuch as technology can enhance access to learning resources and experiences; and can provide avenues for connecting persons.

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