



Unfolding the Transformation Agenda





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National Assembly of the Diocesan Directors of Social Apostolate
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THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF DIOCESAN DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL APOSTOLATE 2018

The National Assembly is a platform created by Caritas India for the member organisations of the national Caritas to converge to exchange their learning and experiences. The National Assembly of Diocesan Directors of Social Apostolate 2018, was organised at St. John's Medical College, Bengaluru on 17 & 18 October.

The overarching theme for National Assembly of 2018, 'Faith4Impact', re-emphasized the faith foundations of the social work ministry of Caritas India and her partners. The sub-theme of 'Unfolding the Transformation Agenda' was pertinently selected to mark the inauguration of the Strategic Plan 2018-23, which Caritas India and her partners had finalised after several reflections and consultations. Strategic Plan 2018-23, is the vision of Caritas India and her partners to take the Good News of transformation to the marginalised and oppressed communities with faith-inspired actions. It is through the transformation of self that larger social transformation could be achieved in a sustainable manner.

The National Assembly was attended by 146 Diocesan Directors of Social Apostolate and 11 regional forum directors, and special guests. It succeeded in cementing the pan-Indian development partnership of Caritas India, and reinvigorated the resolve of the Church-based organisations to strive harder for a just and sustaining social order. The deliberations of the National Assembly riveted on four strategic pillars of Caritas India Strategic Plan 2018-23 and the six strategic themes.

The national assemblies, organised biennially, have contributed to the collective vision-building for the social work apostolate of Church-based development agencies of the country. Apart from strengthening the solidarity of Diocesan Social Service Societies, the national assembly has evolved as a confluence of ideas and as an expression of the synergy of the Church-based development agencies of the country.

Sub-themes

- Empowering Animation
- Dialogue (with poor, nature and duty bearers)
- Volunteering
- Sharing Community
- Principles & Approaches

Methodology

- Talks by inspirational leaders
- Thematic exposition
- Knowledge shop
- Power point presentations
- Group work



Bishop Lumen Monteiro
Chairman, Caritas India

WELCOME MESSAGE

The biennial National Assembly event has always fostered synergy and cooperation. The assembly has emerged as a platform for cross learning and an opportunity for Caritas India partners to share their good work. This way, it is also a platform for the Church-based organisations to showcase their works towards nation building. The unfolding of the transformation agenda in the form of the Strategy Plan is also the reiteration of Church's commitment to the welfare of people and communities. The Church's mandate is to serve the marginalised sections of the society through the ministry of Diakonia. Catholic Social Teachings are fundamental to the reflections on the social ministry of the Church and are in line with the Constitution of the country. Caritas India and her partners need to sustain, with more vigour and rigour, her mission to empower the marginalised through Diakonia ministry.

There was a perceptibly-visible general positivity in the national assembly. All member organisations deserve appreciations for making the National Assembly an emphatic success. The convergence of Caritas member organisations, over the years, has

emerged as platform for all participants to hold collective reflections and deliberations, exchange learning, bring together ideas and share the joy of working with communities. The Strategic Plan document 2018-23 is the result of collective efforts and hard work that aims to steer transformation in the lives of poor and vulnerable people communities bringing synergy for co-operation.

It is the collective responsibility to translate the newly-inaugurated Strategic Plan 2018-22, the transformation agenda, into concrete actions. The enriching discussions on Empowering Animation, Dialogue, Sharing Communities and Volunteerism will chart the course of action of Caritas India and Church-based partners across the country. Church-based organisations have the divine call to be the salt and light of the earth. All organisations should work harder to become true agents of change for which the strategic plan needs to be translated into positive and affirmative action. Caritas India played a laudable role of ably leading the process of preparing the draft strategy paper and dialoguing with partners across the country to create a consensus.

Caritas India deserves appreciation for the coordination role that she has been playing well on the national canvas for several decades. The national assembly should agree on holding guided reflections with time-bound plan and verifiable and clear indicators for assessing the progress of the implementation of the Strategic Plan. Caritas India is committed to offering continuous support to all partners in the form of accompaniment, capacity building and co-ordination that will lead to dialogue for common good.





Fr. Paul Moonjely
Executive Director, Caritas India

FOREWORD

The new Strategic Plan is relevant in the world that is confronted and defaced by various forms of dehumanising poverty, which is a serious disfiguration of the intention of God and creation. As exhorted by Pope Francis, reaching out to the least is the key to happiness. The mission for everyone is to promote an actionable life that will create impacts in the life of everyone. The new Strategic Plan merits to be collectively unfolded as the transformative agenda of the Catholic Church in India.

The Strategic Plan 2018-23 synthesises the concepts of Caritas and Diakonia and charts a roadmap for accomplishing Caritas India mission with the help of four strategic pillars. At the core of the Strategic Plan is the aspiration of Caritas India to see the marginalised and vulnerable communities becoming subjects of development. For this desired outcome, communities need to first become empowered and they should be helped to gain ownership, not just participation, in all social processes.

There is the necessity of promoting the culture of encounter that will help establish a social order that is founded on healthy relationships. Various opportunities need to be explored for engaging the middle class both for mobilising resources of social action and to create more ownership of transformation agenda within the society. Moreover, the Strategic Plan takes into consideration the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and is committed to nation building by contributing in the direction of SDGs. The Strategic Plan also adequately considers subjects of engagement of volunteers, diversification of livelihood opportunities, multi-stakeholder approach and health and wellbeing for all. For all these efforts to become productive, it is inevitable to have effective micro-level interactions and engagements with communities.

The Strategic Plan is an outcome of the 6-year long reflection and consultation. It has been vetted by the governing board of Caritas India and Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, which requires deeper understanding, internalisation and enrichment with life experiences. Caritas India and her partners need to stay relevant by helping communities become subjects of change; and Caritas India is committed to initiate a positive social change and help communities realise their aspirations.





Fr. (Dr) Jolly Puthenpura
Assistant Director, Caritas India

INTRODUCTION

“The joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ” (GS, Vatican II). These words of Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world, amply summarise the relevance and need for Church's social sector engagements. Caritas India is the humanitarian face of the Church in India. Caritas India's social sector engagements have always been inspired by the values enshrined in the Catholic Social Teaching Principles.

The Strategic Plan 2018-2013 of Caritas India is the fruit of collective deliberations with different stakeholders, giving the emphasis for the Organization's key sectoral engagements in the years ahead. It indeed is a forward-looking document in the life of the Organization. The four key Strategic Pillars on which this Vision Document rests are – Empowerment Animation, Dialogue, Promotion of Volunteerism and Promotion of sharing communities. These pillars provide a solid base for further building up the Diakonia Ministry of the Church in India in the years ahead.

All the same, this Strategic Plan of Caritas India needs to be unpacked and disseminated to wider groups and communities with which different Diocesan Caritas Organizations across the country work. I hope and pray that the efforts Caritas India and her Partner Organizations make to disseminate the Strategic Plan among our different stakeholders will help to strengthen our social sector engagements and provide the required focus for our social action in the years ahead in our country.



The ministry of Diakonia which is the ministry of service in the Church takes on various forms and are meant to find befitting responses to different social needs and issues affecting different segments of people especially the poor. Caritas India's humanitarian responses and development works are concrete expressions of human solidarity and people-centred partnerships aimed at brightening the lives of millions of poor people of our country.

MESSAGES

H.E. Joshua Mar Ignathios

Vice President-I, CBCI

The social ministry of the Church is the expression of the emancipatory mission of Jesus Christ. Caritas India, the social arm of the Catholic Church in India, has been participating proactively in the noble mission of the Catholic Church to translate the human and Christian values into enabling and empowering social action. It is, indeed, a joy to see the social commitment of the Catholic Church assuming concrete shape and body as the Strategy Plan document, integrating *Diakonia* as the mission for establishing and safeguarding justice and dignity. I am confident that the Strategic Plan 2018-2023 will chart a new course for Catholic Church in India by defining the four strategic pillars i.e., Empowering Animation, Dialogue, Volunteering and Sharing Communities. These four strategic pillars rightly represent the development philosophy and the theory of change of Catholic Church.



Michel Roy

Secretary General, Caritas Internationalis

Caritas is synonymous with Diakonia. Caritas India's Strategic Plan complements Caritas Internationalis' towards the common mission. Adoption of the four strategic pillars of Empowering Animation, Volunteerism, Dialogue and Sharing Communities is the right endeavour to accomplish the mission of Caritas India. As faith-based organisations, Caritas India and her partners need to strive to translate the mission of the Church into broader and lasting social impacts. There is also the need to build a global solidarity to make Caritas confederation more effective.



Mark D'Silva

Regional Director, Catholic Relief Services Asia

Caritas India and her partners deserve appreciation for arriving at a consensus on the Strategic Plan 2018-23 and giving it a concrete shape in a participatory way. More importantly, Caritas India and her partners have succeeded commendably in implementing 'integral development' that too sustainably, across the country for several decades. The good learning from the works of Caritas India and her partners, had given several important lessons to CRS. Caritas India programmes have helped CRS to design and implement similar interventions in Africa and Latin America, which now cover over 3 million people. Numerous bright opportunities lie ahead for the Church-based agencies led by Caritas India to become relevant to country's socio-economic context.



The commitment and respect to transformation, well-captured by the Strategic Plan 2018-23 is truly admirable. CRS will be very happy to work with Caritas India and her partners, especially to build capacities of Caritas India and her partners based on their 'felt needs'. For increasing the effectiveness of resource mobilisation endeavours, noble ideals need to be attached to the act of giving. Rechristening Fund Raising Department as Charity Giving Department will be a positive step in this direction because the word 'charity giving' expresses the nature and purpose of giving. Church-based organisation need to help people realise the importance and satisfaction of giving so that they contribute happily.

Archbishop Peter Machado

Archbishop of Bengaluru

Social ministry without faith element lacks heart and fundamental orientation. Faith is imperative for achieving *impact* and to be *in-tact*. Faith is integral to the very existence of Caritas India and all Church-based organisations because it gives vigour and direction to their work. Church-based organisations should work intensively to infuse interest among people to engage themselves in the works of charity. People engaged in social ministry should have thorough clarity on development perspectives and the capacity to translate the clarity into positive action. Unfortunately, Catholic Church at times becomes backward in those topics which can take the Church forward. Caritas India should become the harbinger of positive action that will keep the Church relevant in all times. Caritas India and her partners should strive harder to spread the culture of giving which gives unparalleled happiness that reflected in the life of Mother Teresa.



UNPACKING THE STRATEGY 2018-23

Caritas India presented the major highlights of Strategic Plan 2018-23 in the assembly for further discussion and consensus building. The objective of the session was to clarify the strategic perspectives presented in the Strategic Plan and generate a commonality of understanding.



Michel Roy
Secretary General of Caritas Internationalis

There are common threads running through the Strategic Plan of Caritas India and 'One human family: Caring for the creation' the strategy document of Caritas Internationalis. The strategic plan of Caritas Internationalis was approved by the General assembly 2015 and it will be in force till 2023. This way, both Caritas Internationalis Strategy and Caritas India Strategy will have the same operational period which concludes in 2023. Both strategies have similarities in terms of operational focus as they seek to address inequalities and negative consequences of globalisation.

Caritas Internationalis has chosen 5 strategic orientations namely, keeping Caritas at the heart of the Church, saving lives, promotion of sustainable integral human development, building global solidarity and making the Caritas confederation more effective. The objectives of Caritas Internationalis are similar to the vision articulated in the Strategic Plan of Caritas India. Caritas Internationalis will promote a development coordination with “no central authority but with horizontal responsibility”. The strategic plan of Caritas Internationalis, like the Caritas India strategic plan, pledges to adhere to giving centrality to the poor.



Fr. Paul Moonjely

Executive Director, Caritas India

The Strategic Plan entails a theory of change, which is essentially rooted in the spirit of Diakonia. The Strategic Plan is a framework for Caritas India and her partners to operationalise Diakonia in the Indian context and realities. Caritas India has experienced and documented immense learnings from Empowering Animation over last 30 years, where the poor have become owners of change. The people led development is the nucleus of change, which needs to be done through Dialogue. Pope Francis has termed dialogue as the 'Culture of Encounter' with the poor. It entails the right form of relationship with the poor and different constituencies of people. A very strong footing is required to dialogue with duty bearers. Caritas India looks at dialogue in three aspects, i.e., dialogue with the poor, with duty bearers and nature respectively.

Caritas India seeks to bring aboard the middle class, through volunteer engagements, in order to surmount the culture of indifference seeping into this segment of society. Volunteers are the social capital. About a lakh volunteers have been mobilised through different programmes in Kerala, and aim is to mobilise 1 million volunteers over 5 years' period. During the Kerala floods alone, thousands of volunteers including fishermen were mobilised who risked their lives to protect others'. The poor communities in Kerala and Kodagu disasters exhibited phenomenal spirit of sharing, which is the fourth pillar of Caritas India Strategic Plan. Such 'Sharing Communities' get realised when we all are united. However, each of these fundamental pillars require research and right kind of pitching to benefit the partner communities, identified as Tribals, Dalits, women, children and people with disability. It is the responsibility of Caritas India and partners to enable poor and marginalised communities to break the shackles of poverty and distress. It is this approach in the Strategic Plan that Caritas India seeks to take forward.



Babita Alick

Operations Manager, Caritas India

Caritas India is exploring definite directions for finding greater relevance in the country context. The Strategic Plan is an outcome of the several rounds of intensive reflections and consultations held in the pursuit of making Caritas India more relevant in the economic-socio-cultural context. While giving shape to the Strategic Plan document, Caritas India has given respect to the core values of dignity of human person, common good, integral human development, compassion, equity, justice, solidarity, subsidiarity, participation, stewardship and accountability. Apart from these values which guide the strategic programming of Caritas India, the Strategic Plan also influenced by the considerations of environment protection and care for creation, peace, harmony and tolerance.

Diakonia is not only the guiding force but it is also found at the core of all strategic and operational considerations of the Strategic Plan. Caritas India believes that a Diakonia-inspired Strategic Plan will give heart and soul to the to establish and safeguard justice in the society and protect the dignity of the poor.



Benazir Lobo

Dialogue and Partnership Services of Misereor

It is an admirable achievement for Caritas India and her partners to bring out the Strategic Plan after several years of preparations and intensive deliberations. The Strategic Plan will steer the transformation process that Caritas India envisages to trigger and will positively change the life of people. The exhaustive Strategic Plan treads cautiously but boldly expresses its commitment to exercise options for the poor and seeking structural changes. The process orientation of the Strategic plan with a focus on self-help, Rights Based Approach (RBA), community-managed and owned Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) systems is a right step in the right direction. There is the need to sustain the dialogue with the poor, policy makers and practitioners for increasing effectiveness of all programmes of Caritas India and her partners. A lot more could be done in the sector of volunteerism because there are people who would like to join the emancipatory role of the Church. Resource mobilisation should help Caritas India and her partners reach to more communities and should help achieve financial stability for organisations. While increasing the number of sharing communities, Caritas India and her partners can meet the local needs of poor communities; at the same time, can also free themselves from the dependency on international donors. Strategic Plan will considerably enhance the efficiency and give a definite direction to the works of Caritas India and her partners.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SESSION:

- The Strategic Plan should complement the perspective plans that dioceses have adopted.
- The Strategic Plan should not be arbitrarily handed down to partners for compliance. No single agency should arbitrarily coordinate the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The coordination needs to be a democratic partnership process.
- There should be more discussion and dialogue on the processes of coordination and how capacity building could be done at various levels for implementing the Strategic Plan.
- The Strategic Plan document should have a dynamic nature throughout the next five years and should allow continuous value addition and progressive enrichment.

ETHOS & ACTIONS

Creating a commonality of understanding on the four strategic pillars has critical significance in the operationalisation of the Strategic Plan. There is need to have a shared understanding on the perspectives of the Strategic Plan that rest on theoretical postulations of development philosophy and practice of Caritas India and her partners. For achieving this objective of having a collective appreciation for the Strategic Plan and its driving forces and objectives, eminent social workers and professionals presented their experiences and viewpoints in the assembly.



Dr. Rajendra Singh,
Chairman Tarun Bharat Sangh and Ramon Magsaysay award winner

I. Empowering Animation

Local and traditional solutions hold key to water conservation and climate adaptation. Initiatives of mobilised community can achieve water sufficiency even in hostile climatic conditions. Climate change has crippled agriculture, especially of smallholder farmers and poor peasants. Poor farmers are paying for the price of the lavish lifestyle of wealthy countries which are responsible for climate change. Unfortunately, humanity has lost respect and love for the nature which eventually precipitated climate change. For checking the ramifications of climate change stress should be given to identifying and reviving local water conservation methods.

India for the last couple of decades has been facing the climatic extremes of floods and droughts which have triggered massive distress migration. Nowhere on earth groundwater has gone down as seen in in North India and the ground water depletion has touched alarming levels. NASA research findings prove that large-scale irrigation caused 108 cubic kilometres of groundwater to disappear in Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Delhi during 2002 to 2008.

The region indeed has impressive agriculture production, but it has come at the cost of reckless exploitation of groundwater. If urgent measures are not taken for sustainable groundwater use, agricultural system will collapse and cause severe shortage of drinking water which will affect 114 million people of the region. The consequences can be disastrous because 54% of India faces high to extremely high-water stress.

Local solutions to water conservation offer sustainability; hence, they should be developed based on traditional systems and indigenous knowledge. Communities need to be mobilised on the issues of land, water and forests. Measures that should be pursued as solutions to the prevailing water distress include rejuvenation of old water structures, construction of new structures and creation of new village level and river basin institutions. Sustainable watershed management, ground water recharge, judicious use of water, preventing erosion and silting and linking crop pattern with rain pattern are the measures to solve water crisis.

IV. Volunteering

People volunteer to spend their time only when they get an opportunity to engage themselves in a campaign for social cause. A sense of fulfilment is what people expect from volunteering and this is what organisations should offer to volunteers as the reward for the time that they spent in the work of an organisation. Fortunately, there are so many people, especially young professionals, willing to volunteer for making a positive change in society. There is an urge among the youth to step away from office work and take up something more productive and meaningful.



Antoinette Lopez
Volunteer Lead, Accenture Technologies

Organisations can increase their effectiveness and the reach of their programmes by creating opportunities for volunteers to work with them. Organisations should know clearly why one would volunteer to give his/her time to an organisation and what expectations a volunteer will have. Organisations should have clear understanding and systems for volunteer engagement including reward and retention mechanism. Volunteering will become a beneficial engagement for volunteers and organisations when there is a mutuality of understanding regarding the type, nature, duration and benefits of volunteer engagement. Volunteering should suit the possibilities of people; hence, volunteer engagement plan of an organisation should be so flexible that even a person who is ready to volunteer for just one hour should get an opportunity to express his/her social commitment. Organisations should develop responsive and swift volunteer engagement systems so that people get volunteering opportunities as per their expectations.

III. Sharing Community



Fr. Jegath Gasper
Vision Head, ReGreen Chennai

When dialogue is an action, it requires trust and accountability. The ReGreen Chennai initiative exemplifies a model of collaboration and dialogue with nature wherein every contributor paid a nominal Rs. 100 registration fees to run the marathon for nature conservation. This fund was used for meeting the expense of planting 10 trees per runner. This way, one lakh palm trees were planted across Chennai with the funds generated from the marathon. Palm trees were preferred over other trees because they conserve more water per tree and required less water and no pesticides. Powerful ideas have the strength to unite people and persuade them to collaborate beyond caste, religion, culture and other barriers. Powerful social messaging is important in the process of

conscientisation. Development should be 'resource-based' and not based on any predatory model. The concept of 'shared prosperity' needs to be popularised and various social forces need to be mobilised in support of any campaign with a noble cause. The experience of mentoring Dalit entrepreneurs in Tamil Nadu has yielded impressive insights into promoting 'business-only' model. These entrepreneurs who were offered mentoring support have started contributing to social causes from the profit that they earn with the help of the mentoring support.

Church-based organisations need to step out of the narcissistic world, breaking free from the confines of churches and diocese and start connecting with the world outside. The 'Block chain' model is another example of how innovative solutions can sustain community development initiatives. The micro-enterprise model starts with the creation of a trust circle, generating capital, paying Rs. 10,000 to these groups and leaving the management of block chains to professionals. Resources generated from this model are for supporting community level interventions. The success mantra for achieving greater relevance is to 'have the heart of Jesus, the reach of government and the efficiency of corporates'.

IV. Dialogue

'Rights Based Thinking' and dialogue should be premised in the political and economic contexts of the Global South of the 21st century. Any dialogue for advocacy, campaigns, policy actions and solidarity building needs to be based on the 'quest for equality' across the Global South, castes and ethnicity. For instance, 3.3 billion farmers face dispossession every day in global south, because the peasant farmer is always on the axis of starvation, suicides and absence of choices. Industries have not been able to absorb 500 million people who are working in the informal sector industry. Industry 4.0 in India (4th Industrial Revolution) is highly likely to lead to displacement of millions and closing of employment options for the poor.

Discussions on the rights of nature and ecological questions are important and imperative. Ganges and Yamuna rivers have been given the same legal rights as human beings in 2017 with judicial intervention. There is a trend of government assuming ownership than fostership by ousting people. Such incidents are happening in political contexts in which social dialogue needs to be rooted. Sovereignty struggles assumes importance in such contexts. Discussions on groups that were invisible so far have also started yielding good results. The participatory census conducted by Action Aid as part of the Ashray Adhikar campaign enumerated the homeless people in Delhi and their living conditions were documented. Based on the research data developed from this census, Action Aid had built up argument in support for shelter for the homeless. A National Shelter Policy was subsequently adopted with judicial intervention that relied on the findings of the census conducted by Action Aid.



Sandeep Chachra
Country Director, Action Aid India

Similar encouraging and emboldening experiences have come from other initiatives as well. Action Aid's Bhartiya Muslim Mahila Andolan, is one noteworthy initiative which developed local leadership among the Muslim women. The Andolan has grown from strength to strength and has about 50,000 women members. It has flagged several campaigns on issues like triple talaq, entry for women into Haji Ali and property rights for Muslim women.

Church-based organisations should start approaching dialogue as an initiative 'of the people, by the people, for the people, and with the people'. It is necessary that people themselves become actors and organisations facilitate the process in communities. Such people-oriented processes will yield better results that investment of funds.

BUILDING REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES

Regional Forums and Diocesan Social Service Societies (DSSSs) play important roles in furthering the mission of Caritas India at regional and state levels. As institutions playing the responsibility of coordination and capacity building, regional forums are expected to disseminate the Strategic Plan as the development agenda of the Catholic Church and develop capacities at various levels after creating a receptive environment. While forums play the role of overall coordination and capacity building, DSSSs are expected to translate the commitments expressed in the Strategic Plan into concrete action.

Forum directors and diocesan directors prepared region-specific strategies to take the Strategic Plan forward after holding region-wise discussions. There was a general agreement on the premise that

development should not be a 'predatory model' but a 'resource-based model' grounded on 'rights-based thinking' and located in the 21st century. It was also agreed that development has to be by the people, for the people, with the people and of the people. Development progression from dialogue to transformation should cruise in a linear mode from dialogue to conscientisation; conscientisation to empowerment; empowerment to influencing; influencing to transformation. Six regional working groups were constituted to have focussed group discussions on operationalising the Strategy Plan 2018-23 by the Regional Forums and Dioceses, which resulted in following agreements;





General agreements of the Working Group on Dialogue were;

- Build people's agencies and support actors of change and negotiators.
- Resist unequal power structure.
- Enable non-Catholic issue based Open Forums at diocesan and state levels
- Ensure equality, dignity and justice and safeguard the rights in the spheres of social, political and economic domains.
- Reinstate people's sovereignty by reviving traditional systems and ensuring political participation.
- Make governance systems accountable and develop inclusive policies and programmes.
- Create and use 'democratic spaces' within the system to progressively make it better.
- Build people's movements and alliances.
- Garner solidarity to and converge with people's struggles.

General agreements of the Working Group on Empowerment Animation were;

- Mainstream the issues of people living with disabilities in programmes

- Federate women and men farmers at diocesan, district and state levels for enabling marketing linkages for their produce
- Enable fishing communities' federations at diocesan and state levels for realising their socio-economic rights and entitlements

General agreements of the Working Group on Volunteering were;

- Mobilise volunteers under a common brand name for identification
- Establish systems and providing volunteer management training at diocesan level
- Explore youth volunteer mobilisation under health, environment and disaster management etc.

General agreements of the Working Group on Sharing Communities were;

- Strengthen the Lenten campaign at diocesan level across country
- Form the fundraising teams in the dioceses and undertake mapping of potential donors
- Constitute a core group at the dioceses to engage in donor relations

FAITH RESPONSES

The Strategic Plan 2018-23 draws strength from Christian faith and is guided by Christian values. The mission of the Catholic Church in general and Caritas India in particular is propelled by the conviction that humankind can unite with God only through liberation and emancipation. Hence, the emancipatory and redeeming role that Caritas India and her partners play is the veritable expression of Church's mission, which makes her relevant and effective.



Bro. T. Amalan FSC,
President of the Catholic Religious of India

Development action of Church based organisations is perceptibly different because of their faith foundations. Developments in the secular world has had impacted Catholic religious life significantly. The time has come for individuals to be responsible for their own lives.

Church-based organisations need to rely more on the strength of their faith character. Resistance has to be built up against unhealthy systems and conditions in the world by bringing changes in the intervention perspectives and within the premises of religious houses. Given the huge challenges posed by changing times, there is a need to tune in to the voice of the Holy Spirit to keep away from the alluring effect and addictive impact of visual media and Information Communication Technology (ICT). Life has witnessed dramatic changes in the past four decades. Most of these changes have come with external influences. Many are unaware of the undeniable massive impact of visual media. As structures crumble, more and more responsibility is being passed on to individuals to take care of themselves. To navigate successfully through the rough and stormy waters of life, it has become incumbent upon the apostolic religious to hold fast to the Christian world view to 'be in the world but not of the world'. The following possibilities could be explored for the Church in India to stay relevant;

- Critically engaging in the changing social environment with openness
- Building professionalism, competency and commitment among people and leaders
- Engaging equipped people and staff for collaborative work
- Training the religious and clergy at master-level education so that they can involve in proper policy-making decisions.
- Training of capable lay leaders
- Moving to different systems of education and financial models
- Increasing the contribution of Catholic education in research.
- Starting a healthy dialogue between state-centric educational policies and Catholic conception of education
- Empowering local Churches to start and lead higher educational institutions.

The first recipient of the Church's social doctrine is the Church community in its entire membership, because everyone has social responsibilities that must be fulfilled. This doctrine is a light of moral truth that inspires appropriate responses according to the vocation and ministry of each Christian. Faith is tested on a daily-basis by violence, injustice and moral confusion that are ubiquitous. At a time of rampant individualism, Catholic Church stands for family and community. At a time of intense consumerism what should matter the most is how one treats the other. At a time when the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer, moral test of the society should be done to check how the weakest is cared for. Catholic community should emerge as a source of clear moral vision and effective action given the challenging times that the world is beset with. The responsibility of creating clear moral vision and action cannot be assigned to a few or simply delegated to diocesan or national structures. The pursuit of justice and peace is an essential part of what makes a parish Catholic. There is the inescapable need to build local communities of faith where social teaching is central and not fringe; where social ministry is integral and not optional; where it is the work of every believer and not just the mission of a few committed people and committees. Church teaching has always upheld the dignity of work and participation. The human person should always come before the pursuit of profit. Work is an essential part of our human dignity and everyone has the right to participate.



Clara Fernandez,
Vice President of the Catholic Council of India



Dr. Edward Edezhath,
Board Member, Good Neighbour Project,
Jesus Youth India

The well networked grassroots initiatives, of particularly the youth, are most essential elements of the present times. For the young people to come to the real God experience, a self-giving is very important. Some of the vocal examples of youth engagement in social causes have been from the recently Kerala floods, under the 'Good Neighbour' initiative, where they started planning their actions with the very initial stages of public warnings. Their voluntary actions covered rescue operations, relief, medical camp and debris clearing. 1500 volunteers were mobilised and trained in different aspects of disaster response, and subsequently 12 different villages adopted for 1 year recovery initiatives. Initiatives were made possible through youth participation backed with professional support. It is important to accompany young people to the gift of self. Today, platforms are needed to promote the empowered and sensitised young people by accepting their ideas. National Assembly could perhaps be one such platform in this direction.



EMBARKING ON CARITAS INDIA NATIONAL STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

Dr. Saju MK, Zone Manager-West

Ms. Lee Macqueen, Manager-Advocacy & Child Rights

Dr. Haridas, Manager-Climate Adaptive Agriculture and Sustainable Livelihoods

After building consensus on the overall objectives of the transformation agenda in regional working groups, the action proposals which would be implemented for putting the Strategic Plan into practice were shared. The proposals included;

- Mapping social factors of marginalisation in all regions.
- Nurturing leadership of local SC and ST leaders and educated youth.
- Promoting people's participation in political processes.
- Initiating interfaith and issue-based dialogue to overcome polarisation.
- Identifying leaders and influential opinion makers who can become a positive force.
- Initiating movements and/or identifying existing movements and joining them.
- Dialogue for implementation of Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP).
- Sustain continuous dialogue with government organisations and departments.
- Functionalise open forum institutions at diocesan and state levels.
- Working with local governance leaders and helping them become real change makers.
- Raising and strengthening women farmers' fora.
- Ensuring participation of communities and their collectives in Gram Sabha and in the political processes at all levels.
- Continuous engagement with corporates for resource mobilisation including expertise.
- Initiate interface meetings with government & NGOs at diocesan level.
- Creating an environment for participatory programme planning with a lead role for communities.

For implementing the action proposals, the member organisations suggested several measures that are in alignment with the considerations and priorities spelt out in the Strategic Plan. The below-given measures or strategic actions would be initiated at national, regional and state levels for ensuring that the Strategic Plan is implemented with the right intensity.

- Empowerment, education and information
- Interfaith dialogue
- Strengthening local governance structures and systems
- Promoting and developing community leaders
- Fostering people's collective action and grassroots level movements
- Policy engagements with legislative and executive systems
- Research and evidence-building
- Online and print media engagements at national and local/regional levels.
- Networking and forging alliances.



Reflection & Response:
Mr. Ranmal Samarawickrama,
Design, Monitoring,
Evaluation & Learning
Advisor, Asia Group, Caritas
Australia

The values enshrined in Caritas India Strategic Plan, viz. dignity, subsidiarity, solidarity and preferential actions for the poor complements Caritas Australia's. Regarding the four pillars, Empowering Animation, is a process, and must continue outside the project confines. In terms of Dialogue, if done properly, in the right time and with people, is sacred. As a donor, when project proposals are developed in consultation with communities, it is sacred to Caritas Australia. About Volunteering, it is important to remember that volunteers time has monetary value, and it is not free. Volunteers need to be protected, and they need to be ensured a nourishing experience, to be able to give back. Systems and structures for induction and accompaniment are essential. On the Sharing Community front, building local resource base can liberate the organisations of varied conditionality attached to foreign funding; and provide freedom to utilise the resources better. Congratulations to Caritas India for developing the Strategic Plan which will help Caritas Australia advocate and promote Caritas India's work.

PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES

Strategic Plan 2018-23 presents in a pronounced way the principles and approaches which are drawn from various documents that form basis of the Catholic Church's mission to positively transform the world. The assembly discussed the major principles and approaches that will be put in to practice with the implementation of Strategic Plan 2018-23.



Fr. Paul Moonjely
Executive Director, Caritas India

The development challenges of the country are colossal, but a collective spirited action can surmount these challenges. The mission of bringing development to the large number of poor people is so huge that no agency can singlehandedly accomplish this objective. A partnership based on dialogue and mutual respect, brings together the Church as a unified collective and contributes to building institutional capacities and mobilizing resources. Besides, partnership pools together skills, experiences, and ideas. Major elements that determine the nature and functionality of partnership include shared vision, subsidiarity, complementarity and mutuality, equity, openness and respect, transparency, strengthening of civil society, organizational development, community participation and sustainability. The modalities of partnership include relationship and communication, accountability as per the Caritas International Management Standards (CIMS) and conflict resolution. The Open Mike hour brought forth the following agreements and reflections from the audience.

- Caritas India should explore the possibilities of engaging with the Government of India and creating visibility to the works of partner organisations.
- Caritas India should liaise with governments at various levels so that the work of Catholic Church as a collective is recognized and respected at all levels.
- Church leadership to include more Dalits in the decision-making processes of the Church so that they do not remain on the margins of society and of the Church.
- Dalit Christians and other minorities should be included in Church-based-organisations, and their participation at all levels of programming be ensured.
- The Strategic Plan should consider other factors of marginalization and create space at the National Assembly to discuss them, as the marginalized communities constitute 30% of the society.
- More powers and authority should be given to regional forums to steer Strategic Planning process.
- There should be continuous involvement of the Catholic Church groups like laity, especially lay women professionals, the religious and others in the progressive enrichment of the Strategic Plan.
- The Strategic Plan should align itself with the strategic plans of important Church stakeholders like congregations and other sub-church groups.

- A white paper on the functionality of National Caritas, regional fora and partner DSSSs could be published for creating greater clarity on the role of these three institutions.
- Caritas India will work to initiate a national development consortium which would include dioceses, men and women congregations, laity organisations etc. This consortium will establish national-level coordination and make Caritas India a more representative Catholic organisation.
- Caritas India should clearly spell out her transformation agenda and how the transformation agenda will be implemented.
- Mechanisms should be functionalised for the continuous introspection and assessment so that the implementation of the transformation agenda is made more effective.
- More women representatives should be appointed in Church-based organisations and their participation in the national assembly should be increased.
- A common platform needs to be established at national level for ensuring the coordinated implementation of the Strategic Plan
- Parallel structures should be avoided at national level that would duplicate the functions of Caritas India in coordinating the Strategic Plan
- Progress of strategic plan implementation should be assessed on the parameter of quality of partnership and outcomes in the communities, and shared before the subsequent National Assembly.



COMMITMENT TOWARD IMPACT

This national assembly adopts the Strategic Plan 2018-23 and commit to hold national, regional and diocesan level reflections and consultations for greater internalisation of the strategic objectives. Diversity of contexts and aspirations of communities will be respected, and localised strategies will be integrated to the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan will be disseminated at all levels and continuous dialogue will be held for ensuring role clarity and fulfilment of strategic outcomes. The Assembly also commits to respect the dynamic nature of the Strategic Plan and agree to revisit and refine the document, regularly, to make it relevant to changing realities. Caritas India and her partners will endeavour to contribute globally to strengthen the Caritas Confederation and the global solidarity for justice.

The practice of Empowering Animation will be further strengthened, and the empowerment process will be made more people-owned by strengthening local leadership. Empowering Animation, with strong faith in people's ability to transform social realities, will continue to recognize community's wisdom, help communities regain confidence and assist them to get organised to act collectively. Empowering Animation will nurture organised collectives of people facing vulnerabilities and create higher levels of people's organisations for effective engagement with policy making processes. Empowering Animation will strive for the empowerment and emancipation of women in all spheres of life.

The assembly accepted Dialogue as a multi-dimensional transformative process that will engage with the poor, the duty bearers and the nature for creating more responsiveness and ownership at community level, accountability at governance level and to ensure equitable and sustainable utilisation of natural resources. The assembly agreed to broaden the development response of Catholic Church by joining hands with civil society, corporates, government and other faiths. The idea of creating a common identity with Caritas India and her Partners would be deliberated further.



Rajesh Upadhyay
HoD-Partner Support Services,
Caritas India

The assembly resolved to foster and popularise volunteering to give opportunities to desiring groups and individuals to connect to the people in need. The assembly committed to raise a one-million strong volunteer force by implementing a robust volunteer engagement programme covering registration, retention, experience exchange and reward systems.

The assembly also pledged to strive to achieve resource sufficiency by creating a dependable base of Sharing Communities for expanding coverage and programme reach. By implementing a resource development plan for engaging communities that are willing to share, member organisations set the target to mobilise locally at least 50% of programme funds. Efforts would be made toward building linkages with educational institutions, youth groups, retired people and companies to mobilise volunteer engagement.

The assembly also resolves to sustain organisation education of Strategic Plan for increasing its implementation effectiveness. With a strong faith in the efficacy of synergy to accelerate transformation, the members of the assembly expressed the resolve to continue dialogue, reflection, value addition and progressive refinement to translate the Strategic Plan 2018-23 into an impactful action in communities for the good of the humanity and nature.

LOOKING FORWARD

Intensive discussions held on the Strategic Plan in the National Assembly have proved to be immensely beneficial for the progressive enrichment of the Strategic Plan, which evolved as a living document after a 6-year long reflection and consultation process. The Strategic Plan 2018-23 was hammered out after creating a consensus at national level and with the approval of the decision makers of the Church. The enthusiastic participation and critiquing by member organisations have helped Caritas India add value to the Strategic Plan. It is gratifying to see the assembly members rallying around the transformation agenda 2018-23.

The Strategic Plan 2018-2023, is a testimony of the new thinking process happening within Caritas India and her partners including religious congregations. Caritas India will continue to be a learning organisation which seeks to incrementally improve her performance by drawing lessons from her own practice and experience of the others. Caritas India will incubate more ideas and roll them out as

programmes so that the overall quality and reach of Caritas India interventions continue to scale new heights. Suggestions and recommendations for the continuous improvement of the Strategic Plan will be respected. Constructive feedback and criticisms of partners have served the objective of continuously improving programme quality of Caritas India. Caritas India is committed to nurture and nourish partnerships which will be the conduit for Caritas India to reach to the unreached.

The National Assembly of the directors of social apostolate, regional forums, partners and supporters of Caritas India, held in Bengaluru on 18 October 2018, expresses its resolve to continue the campaign seeking dignity, equity and justice. Caritas India and partners are committed to accomplish positive social transformation while remaining rooted to Diakonia.

Fr. Paul Moonjely

Executive Director, Caritas India

SOCIAL INNOVATION AWARDEES



The National Assembly honoured the commendable work being done Caritas India partners in the field of social development. PGSSS, Gorakhpur won the first prize for its innovative disability integrated organic farming model. The second prize went to Seva Kendra, Kolkata for its initiative in setting up solar villages and the third prize was given to Alleppey Diocesan Charitable and Social Welfare Society for the Community Radio that was used during Kerala Floods. Social Service Centre, Shillong received appreciation award for its people-led organic food market and the second appreciation prize was given to Karunya Trust, Kalyan, for the Gyansathi programme an education initiative for slum children.

The award was based on the following criteria- Number of people directly benefited by the innovation, impact of the innovation, scalability and applicability, sustainability and cost effectiveness.





Thanks to our
honourable speakers

A
Shared Journey Towards
Social Transformation



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