

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANCY SECRETARIES MEET 2010
16-18 APRIL 2010
INDIAN SOCIAL INSTITUTE, BANGALORE-560 046

Present:. Edward (POSA), Peter Raj, K.C. Philip, Norbert Menezes,, Albert Muthumalai, Charles Lasrao, Noel Oliver, George Anthony, Xavier Jeyaraj, Benny Moolan, Thomas Kuriacose, Erwin Lazrado, Alexius Ekka, Ambrose Jeyaraj, Prakash Louis (Reg.Dir, JRS), Peter Daniel (PDD)

Could Not be Present: Fr. Amaladoss could not be present. However, he had sent a short report of the major events in the JERES highlighting project of the Assistancy Studies Commission and the meeting of the Faculty Members of Theology and Philosophy that will take place in December 2010. Fr. Amaladoss's note was read in one the sessions allotted for sharing.

Assembling around the Altar on the Eve of the Meet: The inaugural mass that signalled the commencement of the Secretaries' Meet 2010, in Indian Social Institute Bangalore was presided over by Fr. Albert Muthumalai in the evening on 16 April 2010, the day of the arrival.

The Inaugural Session: On 17 April 2010: The first session started at 8.30 am after a brief invocation by Fr. Erwin Lasrado, Fr. Edward extended a warm welcome to all the Secretaries particularly the new ones who have joined the team recently. In his observations of orientation for the meeting, Fr. Edward took a broader and contextual view of the Church today, which is going through pangs of turmoil and crisis, not unlike that of the turbulent times of the reformation era. But the crisis era provided the Church also with unbelievable avenues for purification, opportunities for the saints of the times like St. Ignatius who loved the Church in spite of the flaws and blemishes and vigorously pursued the path of renewal and humble service in response to the signs of the times. As the Church is grappling with the repercussions of the recent crisis, the Society can stand by the Church, help it to reflect on the meaning of the events unfolding and offer its assistance to ensure that similar crisis does not erupt again in future. In India too, the Church through the CBCI is taking steps to look at the problem squarely and arm itself with adequate safeguards to protect itself from such onslaughts in future. In this context, Fr. Edward recalled the clarion call that Pope Benedict gave to the Society in his allocution to the Delegates of the GC 35, to be men of culture and learning and to be at the Frontier Areas and to remain there, braving the dangers and difficulties

and showing perseverance and persistence even when the going gets tough. The Secretaries have to respond to this call with creative initiatives and responses in their respective sectors. Fr. Edward also drew our attention to the increasing demand on JCSA to provide quality men for the international needs of the Society and for taking up significant leadership roles. The present situation is not encouraging and we could ill afford to be complacent, he added. With four thousand men at our disposal, it is shockingly proving to be difficult to find one or two competent men to fill in the emerging slots in Houses of Apostolic Works such as Sadhana and the two ISIs. We need to rethink our strategies for recruitment and formation keeping in view the local and international imperatives, he concluded.

Sharing of the Secretaries: In the following two sessions of the day, the Secretaries shared the salient developments, success stories, comforting and consoling dimensions of their respective ministries as well concerns and occasional conflicts they had to face while embarking on new ventures and initiatives. The Secretaries had thoughtfully brought and circulated a one-page report to keep the sharing more focussed.

IV Session Issues, concerns and questions From the Secretaries' Sharing:

It was felt that we should identify some major themes emerging from the Secretaries' sharing and the concerns expressed by them. The following are the issues and questions that were culled out and enumerated:

1. Demand for quality personnel in all sectors of our apostolic engagements. How do we meet this demand? We need men of learning and culture to work at the frontier missions.
2. How do we bring about awareness of the peoples through advocacy and other means available in regard to some of the issues, problems, policies and legislative initiatives of the Government that affect the people?
3. How do we keep track of the current issues like Right to Education, Right to Food, Forest Act etc
4. In view of the increasing leadership roles that the South Asia will be called upon to assume in the next 10 years, what attempts are being made to prepare men who excel in the fields of Theology, Spirituality, Advocacy, and social fields?
5. Second Generation of academic professionals who have also the advantage of grassroots experience have to be prepared.
6. Planning of personnel. Provinces seem to think only of their own needs. Qualified Province men seem reluctant to move to the Assistancy Houses of apostolic works.

7. Secretaries, during their visits to the Provinces should impress upon their Province commissions and Provincials to prepare at least five persons who can be in the forefront of various ministries in terms of knowledge, qualification, expertise and experience.
8. A percentage should be worked out for setting apart men for Assistancy needs, according to the numerical strength of the provinces.
9. Evaluation of the Impact Factor is imperative, to make our ministries effective and fruitful.
10. Create new ventures in response to the emerging needs rather than invest resources merely in the continuance of existing structures.
11. Our mindsets have to change. We should not erroneously think that if best persons are given to the Assistancy, they are lost to the provinces. We should not think that each person can do only one work. Multitasking is the need of the hour. We should not fall into the error of perpetuating the myth that only a Jesuit should head every work in our ministry. Create linkages among the ministries and apostolic ventures.
12. The Society of Jesus has to move away from all vestiges of regionalism, casteism.
13. Zonal Cooperation is indispensable. More result-oriented work could be accomplished at the Zonal level and this will call for sharing of personnel, finances, and ministries.
14. Lay Collaboration with all its complexities, advantages and drawbacks should be more generously explored, and more daringly experimented.
15. Mobilising internal resources will be increasingly important. An effective mechanism has to be evolved to achieve this.
16. Jesuits and Alumni tend to respond more readily to issues that are close to the local and regional realities.
17. Alumni should be challenged to go beyond the club mentality to think of universal needs.
18. Alumni who are on the verge of retirement in their professional life are likely to respond more generously to important needs and projects.
19. Clarity is required in our vision and mission at all levels. Strategic plan has to be evolved for every province.
20. Young Jesuits need to be presented with a universal perspective of the Society of Jesus.
21. We need to develop a sense of corporate responsibility. A new vision for the JCSA should be evolved to which all the provincials will commit themselves, owning it up as their own.

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Fr. Edward's Sharing in the Larger Perspective of the Universal Society:

The major part of this session was devoted to Fr. Edward's sharing of his perspective of his mission in the aftermath of the CIP Meet and in the spirit of the GC 35.

The following salient points emerged from his sharing and the suggestions and views that were expressed on certain issues that came up for consideration.

a. The primary task of the POSA is to take care of the common works of the Assistancy. It is easier for the South Asia Assistancy to feel a sense of commonality and bonding than it may be for other Assistancies may not feel. Due to Province compulsions, Provincials are not able to respond wholeheartedly to Assistancy needs.

b. The borderline between mission and career seems to be fast becoming blurred because of which, the availability of individual Jesuits to respond to exigencies of mission seems to be severely limited. The apparent flaw in formation in this respect should be soon remedied.

c. Our preferential option should not be misconstrued. Working for a particular group does not mean that we are against others. What we should be up against are unjust and unrighteous attitudes and actions and not persons. The Rich and the Poor have to come together to put out their best efforts for nation building.

d. JCSA is going through the process of introspection, reflecting on how to make itself more effective, more co-responsible and make its presence felt in the wider arena by responding to the needs of the universal Society.

e. If South Asia in the past was not an impressive force to be reckoned with in the past, it was because we did not have a far-sighted and a wider vision. Consequently our formation strategies were geared to training men for only immediate local needs. In a way, a course correction is possible now because of GC35, which has given a clarion call for new frontiers. New frontiers should not be understood in terms of foreign missions. We have to look for new frontiers within existing missions by being more creative and looking for challenging dimensions in our ministries.

f. We are an integral and important part of the Church and we have to play our roles in the changed scenario, which is also constantly evolving. This is coming upon us too fast, and Provincials as a body will have to wake up to this urgency. We may need to take courageous and informed decisions. It is not enough that South Asian Jesuits go to Europe to continue what they

had been doing before. The Society of Jesus of the future will be different. The changing demographic shift in the Society will bring about many responsibilities on South Asia

g. In order to relieve the burden on Provinces to have a Commission for every separate ministry, POSA suggested the following linking, or working together of Secretariats: 1) JEPASA and JSD (Dialogue); 2) JEHESA (Higher Education) and JEA; 3) ACF (Formation), Brothers, JERES, JIGSA and Vocation Promotion; 4) JESCOM and Jesuit Artists; 5) JESA, JYMSA, JEMAI and JRS; 6) COJET and PDD.

h. Each Province is expected to have a separate coordinator for each ministry. However, each Province will have to decide, on the basis of its needs and volume of work, whether a ministry needs a Commission or not.

i. The coordinator of a ministry which does not have its own Commission will attend the meetings of the related Secretariat at the Assistancy and spell out the needs of their ministry. So for example, Even if JESCOM does not have a Commission in each Province, the Coordinator identified for this ministry, can attend the meetings of other Commissions and Secretariats.

j. This proposal will be put to the next JCSA meeting so that appropriate action is taken in this regard.

A Few of Secretaries' Responses and a couple of Clarifications: The Secretaries responded to some of the main thrusts of POSA's observations on some of the issues. The following views stood out in their responses.

1. Given contextual needs there may be need to have several Commissions, at least for a few years, so the Province, despite shortage of men can have many necessary Commissions. This will necessitate appointing some men to more than one Commission particularly in Provinces or Regions that have smaller number of Jesuits. .

2. In some of the Provinces, a few Commissions which exist only to fulfil the requirements of the Assistancy Guidelines do not function very well.

3 It may be to set up a Committee to study this question from a more professional angle. Every meeting of a Commission must have a plan, and those who organise it should have a clear idea of the objectives, process

and the expected outcome. JCSA must give a mandate as to what is expected.

4. Commissions of the Province must enjoy the confidence of the Provincial. Where Provincials do not take seriously the recommendations of the Commissions in regard to their respective ministries, the Commissions are rendered redundant and their annual meetings end up as exercises in futility. Sometimes Provincials totally bypass Commissions or decide against policies of Commissions, thus making a mockery of the Commission or giving the impression of total arbitrariness.

5. Provinces must factor the role of their Province Commissions into their mode of governance.

6. Province Coordinators need to keep in regular touch with the respective Assistancy Secretary. They should be encouraged to use modern means of communication like email, skype etc to keep up an ongoing exchange of views and news with their Assistancy Secretaries. .

7. The launching of the e-newsletter by JESA Secretary came in for special commendation. In this connection, a suggestion was made to the effect that one month the newsletter can carry JESA specific news items and in the next month, snippets of news from other Secretariats could be carried.

8. The aforesaid suggestion was readily accepted and the Secretaries were requested to send interesting news items relating to their secretariats and commissions, keeping in mind that the despatch should not exceed the length of 250 words and the news items should be already edited and insertion-ready. The first four lines should be so framed as to attract and arouse the interest of the readers, inducing them to click on **More** to get the complete story. Addition of a photograph bearing on the event described might enhance the reader-interest of the item. The news items should reach the JESA Secretariat by 15 of alternate months.

9. POSA stressed the importance of strengthening the functioning of the Zones. There is a grater measure commonality within the Zones and considerable disparities and variations at the national level. It was also remarked by another Secretary that even within North Zone there are many dissimilarities and disparities. Zonal level networking will be more fruitful.

10. Important decisions of JCSA will be communicated to the Secretaries if they have some bearing on the Secretariats. One or two Secretaries could

be invited to attend the JCSA Meeting for a day to share their concerns and needs to the Apex Body of the Major Superiors in keeping with the past practice. This will enable the Provincials to keep themselves abreast of what major developments in the Assistancy Secretariats.

11. POSA clarified that the recent JCSA decision to attach one or two Provincials to each of the Secretariats was taken with a view to getting the Provincials involved in the Secretariats and to offer encouragement and constructive support to the Secretariats. This will also provide a two-way link of communication between the Secretariats and the JCSA. The Provincial attached to each of the Secretariats will make it a point to attend the annual meeting of the Secretariat. In cases where two Provincials are assigned to a single Secretariat, at least one will attend if the other is impeded.

12. The JCSA needs to have a long term and short term plans for Missions in Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

13. Assistancy-level leadership training programme could be arranged and skills in planning, team building, conflict resolution, norms of our way of proceeding can be imparted. In the same way, for scholastics useful courses like basics in account keeping can be organized.

12. The importance of establishing an Ignatian Study Centre was reinforced in the suggestions made by POSA and the other Secretaries. To make the Centre more accessible and attractive for prospective researchers, it should be geographically well located and the weather should normally be conducive to serious study. In this connection, it was pointed out that the facilities of the Centre for Ignatian Spirituality at Dindigul could be utilized to accommodate the proposed Ignatian Study Centre. Other suggestions related to studying the feasibility of locations like Lonavla, Mumbai, Chennai and Pune. One more option suggested was converting and suitably modifying a few rooms in Satyodayam, Secunderabad, with the addition of air-conditioners. When the Ignatian Study Centre comes into existence and goes fully operational, it could be linked with all the Secretariats for infusing a contemporary Ignatian thrust to all our ministries and works.

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Responding to Questions on the Themes of the Assistancy Meet:
Prior to taking up questions relating to the three themes which would

receive the focus of attention and deliberations during the forthcoming Assistancy Consultation, a question was raised as to why Fundamentalism was not included among the themes selected for the Consultation, particularly in the South Asian Context. It was clarified that though the theme of fundamentalism as such does not figure in the Decrees explicitly, it did figure in the deliberations and in a note added to the Decrees.

Ecology

1. How do we develop further a spirituality of ecology founded on the Jesuit sources of the Spiritual Exercises and Mission documents and in conversation with Indian traditions?
2. How can we promote ecological concerns through further academic studies and research? Propose ways and means to do that, at the international, assistancy, province and community levels?
3. Propose ways and means that will improve the quality of our Jesuit life at the personal and community level, through eco-friendly ways.

The following views were expressed on this theme in answer to the questions given:

- a.** We need to develop eco-sensitive spirituality, cosmos-centric rather than homocentric approach which is exploitative in nature.
- b.** Realizing the interdependence of man and nature, we need to cultivate a sense of respect concern for preservation of various species particularly the endangered ones or the ones on the verge of imminent extinction so that we do something towards maintaining the ecological balance.
- c.** We need to promote need-based rather than greed-based economy. In our institutions and areas of apostolate, special attention should be given to using renewable and non-conventional sources of energy.
- d.** Jesuit community life should be balanced and eco friendly – our spirituality is that, we are called to a simple life style; called to discover God who is present in all the creation etc. We should bring about within ourselves and around us an integral harmony in the triptych, Man-Nature-God. In this endeavor, being closer to the poor will facilitate living closer to Nature. We should develop a paradigm of evolving an eco-friendly life within our communities.
- e.** In our educational institutions (secondary and higher), we should introduce some component of environmental studies. Courses on Bio-Ethics should be introduced in the faculties of philosophy, theology and in Institutes of Business and Management.
- f.** Ecology has to grip us at the emotional level. We need to educate and conscientize ourselves to live close to the poor and close to nature.
- g.** In the Assistancy Consultation, we should work towards time bound programme. Otherwise, all our deliberations will exercises in wishful thinking

and futility. We should commit ourselves to an actionable programme that is measurable in terms of tangible results in a period of five years.

h. Some of our men should do serious research in sustainable development, preservation of coastal resources (south), mountainous resources (north and north east), forest (tribal belt) resources, and help in promoting the integral development of human communities. The 4 zones must take initiatives in this area, depending on their resources.

i. When exploitative and unscrupulous forces are depleting the resources of nature to the detriment of the well being of poor and the tribals, **are we ready to take a stand in defence of the poor and in favour of upholding the rights of the poor?**

j. We should have a holistic view of ecology within the broader context of the integral development of man. We should not endanger a human being at the cost of saving a tree.

Displacement and Migration.

1. What are the ways to promote further scientific research on the issues of migration and displacement? Are our social centres sufficiently equipped to work on these areas? Have we explored sufficiently the role of advocacy in this regard?
2. Can we propose a developmental model that suits on the one hand greater progress in quality of life of our people and on the other hand takes into account the specificities of South Asia, based on our mission documents?
3. What mechanism do we need to put in place to deal with migration and displacement issues at the assistantcy level? How can we engage these issues in a tangible way?

In addressing the questions on Displacement and Migration, the following views were articulated:

a. The need of the hour is 'development without displacement. At least some of us should engage in serious studies on issues of Displacement and Migration. Courses in Social Sciences in our institutions should be linked with our Social Centres.

b. Wherever the recent Government Initiatives like NREGAS were seriously implemented, it has stopped migration.

c. Land alienation and resource deprivation are some of the major causes of displacement and migration. We need to distinguish **economic migration** of those pursuing upward mobility from the **forced migration** of the poor necessitated by the wanton commercial destruction of the forest or indiscriminate industrial expansion, without ensuring fair, adequate and just compensation of those displaced.

d. We should create linkages with other agencies and NGOs working with the victims of displacement and migration.

- e.** The proliferation of agencies procuring domestic workers is often the offshoots of displacement. They are exploited and victimised by the touts and commercial minded agents.
- f.** Our social Centres should bring out fruits of research in this area, which have the stamp of credibility and scholarship. ISIs must have a desk, which would take the issues of migration, displacement people, and do ministries with these people.
- g.** If migration becomes inevitable, we should work towards safe migration and documented migration so that those who are forced to migrate are not deprived of the benefits of social security and other advantages of Government schemes and projects.

Community as Mission

1. Community-Identity-Mission form one tryptich according to D.2 of GC 35. Can we substantiate this complementarity further from our Jesuit sources, especially from the deliberations of our first fathers. How do we articulate this complementarity for our life and mission in the Assistancy?
2. Develop a vision of Community that embraces the 'other' based on the model of the trinitarian vision in the Sp. Exercises? How do we develop the notion of the church as community of believers in a fast globalizing world?
3. In the south Asian context, how can we develop a notion of community (vasudaiva kudmbakam) that promotes inter-religious, inter-cultural and inter-linguistic identities beyond caste, religion and language?

In regard to our reflections on the Community life, the following observations were made:

- a.** The Congregation's decision to devote a decree to the triptych of Identity, Mission and Community is not simply an inward looking exercise. In answer to the question how Community becomes Mission, it was explained that so long as a community gives a credible witness of unity in a world that is fragmented and fractured by ethnic and fissiparous tendencies and attitudes, it becomes a mission.
- b.** A person who cannot live in a community and build a Jesuit community will not be in a position to build a community of people outside.
- c.** We should be candid enough to acknowledge that we have prejudices and preferences based on region, language and caste. But we should refrain from acting on them.
- d.** In our appointments (Provincials, Superiors, Consultors etc.) we give an impression that we are overly concerned to perpetuate groupism,

regionalism (language) and casteism. Due representation could be healthy, but when subtle but systematic lobbying for the interests of various groups surface, it will deflect our focus us from the larger perspective of the mission. The impression that some groups have godfathers to promote their causes should be avoided.

e. We should be honest in facing up to these divisive issues. Sweeping under the carpet will be counter-productive. We should not be in denial mode. We should talk about it so that we do not become victims of blind insularity. In India and elsewhere identity-politics is gaining ground.

f. Cynicism is growing in administration of many of the provinces. This creates negativism, feeling of hopelessness giving rise to back biting, and sapping of creative energy.

g. While we are conscious of our differences, we should not lose sight of the heritage of Jesuit Culture- Our Way of Proceeding-

Fundamentalism

Terms used with Different Connotations in Europe and India. The term is variously interpreted in Europe and America and it carries another pejorative connotation in India because of the rigidity, exclusivity and intolerance shown by the fundamentalist, fanatic, fringe groups which have been wreaking havoc, destroying the delicate fabric of communal harmony. Traces of fundamentalism can be seen in our own lives when we do not give space and freedom for others, when we act on regional, ethnic and narrow considerations, nurture prejudices and foment pet hates.

a. In India, we need to situate fundamentalism in the context of human rights and violation of constitution.

b. There is a streak of fundamentalism in all our irrational prejudices, in our superiority complex rooted in the feeling that we are the best, and any expression of intolerant attitude.

III Session- 18 April 2010:

Farewell to KC:

In view of KC Philip's request to be relieved of his responsibilities of ADF in the ensuing academic year, Erwin Lazrado paid him an affectionate tribute, on behalf of the Secretaries, eulogising his services to the Assistency in the Formation Sector and appreciating his participation in the Secretaries' Meet. He recalled the prompt

acceptance of his request to address the delegates of the JYMSA MEET in Bangalore. Earlier, Fr POSA too appreciated his contribution to the Assistency Commission of Formation by organising the annual meet of the Rectors and PCFs and his efforts to enthuse the youngsters in formation. K.C Philip suitably replied to the generous sentiments expressed.

Planning and Evaluation:

Dates Proposed dates for the next year's Secretaries' Meet are:

08: April 2011	Arrival
09 and 10: April	Sessions
10 April 2011 at 4.00 pm	Departure

Venue: Either Sadhana Institute, Lonavla OR
JDV P.G. Block, Pune

In due course, the finalized venue would be communicated to all.

Tentative Dates For Secretariats' Annual Meetings!

Aug 28-29	Ranchi	Dialogue
Sep 16-18,2010	Dumka/Calcutta	JYMSA
Sep 20-22, 2010-	Waynad	Brothers
Sept 29-Oct 4, 2010	Raia , Goa	ACF
October 19, 2010	Place yet to be decided	JIGSA
October or November	Ranchi	JESCOM
November, 2010, I week	Raia, Goa	PDD
November 5-7	Bhubaneshwar/Jamshedpur	JHEASA
Nov: 11&12, 2010	Baga, Goa	JEPASA
Nov 2010: 3rd Week:	Bhubaneshwar-	JEA
March 2010 I Week	Yet to be decided	JEMAI

[If the dates mentioned above are erroneously mentioned or the dates or venues are still undecided, the concerned Secretary will notify the same to the other Secretaries when they are finalised]

Evaluation:

1. The arrangements and logistics for the meeting were quite adequate.

2. Sharing was good. The instruction to keep the written material to one page helped us to put down only substantive issues and to keep the sharing focused.
3. Some of the issues that surfaced during the discussion could be more extensively dealt with after the sharing.
4. Since we seemed to be running short of time, a session on the evening of the day of the arrival could be planned instead of expanding the two-day meet to three-day meet.
5. POSA's sharing was enlightening and enlarged our horizons by the due emphasis he placed on the universal dimension and the references he made to what is going on in the global scenario of the Society and the major roles that the South Asia Assistancy will be called upon to assume in future.
6. Overall, the meeting generated a good sense of fellowship among the Secretaries, useful exchange and sharing of views, news, and resulted in a renewed vigour to do more in our respective ministries.

The hospitality and the arrangements provided for the Meet by the local Community were acknowledged in the presence of Fr. Karunaidas the administrator and Fr. M.K George, the Director of ISI.

The Meeting of the Secretaries came to a close at 4.00 pm with a hymn of thanksgiving.