

RELAF - VII Regional Assembly

“ Organize in each Region, within a maximum of one year from the publication of the Chapter documents, a meeting, forum, or assembly suitable for defining at the Regional level the co-responsibility strategies necessary to complete the process of “Appreciative Inquiry” according to the keys provided by the Chapter’s work.”

Cir. 478, Document of the 46th General Chapter. November 2022.

Following this call of the 46th General Chapter, the General Assembly of RELAF was held at the beginning of April 2023 in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Some 35 delegates from different parts of Africa took part in this Regional meeting.

It all started with the arrival, reception and installation of the delegates at the Reception and Retreat Centre of the Father Capuchins, in the Angré District, in the Cocody municipality.

Present were the Visitors and Delegation Presidents, the Sector Coordinators, the Directors of the common houses of formation, the Regional team, the delegates of the Districts and Delegations, and some guests: moderators of the preparatory commissions, members of CIAMEL, representatives of young Lasallians and young Brothers.

The Assembly began with a prayer followed by words of welcome and opening pronounced respectively by the young Brother Urbain Andrinirina, new Secretary of RELAF and by Brother Anatole Diretenadji, General Councillor. In his opening remarks, Brother Anatole indicated to the participants the context in which the present assembly is being held: “Dear delegates, by finding ourselves here together, delegates from different sectors of our Region, our Assembly is taking place in the context of ecclesial synodality. It summons us and invites us to walk together, to dialogue, to listen to each other in order to hear and agree on matters of common interest for the good of the Institute in general and that of our Region in particular”. He continued by announcing that this VII Assembly would have two main objectives: The first objective is to revise the basic texts of RELAF in order to align them with the new model of governance called for by the 46th General Chapter. The second objective is to give RELAF a new strategic action plan for the next seven years.

After a fun and entertaining session to get to know each other, Brother Carlos Gómez, Vicar General, addressed the Assembly on behalf of the Superior General and his Council. Brother Carlos invited the delegates and Lasallians from Africa to join with other Lasallians from around the world to build new paths to transform lives. He insisted on the importance of embracing the Leavening Project as a sure way of reaching out to sisters and brothers living in the existential peripheries.

After these various interventions, the timetable, agenda and rules of procedure proposed by the organising committee were examined and approved unanimously. The officers of the Assembly were also appointed, namely two moderators, two secretaries, two scrutineers, one secretary for the minutes and one chronicler. This team took office immediately.

Thus, in the hours and days that followed, the preacher of the commission for the revision of the basic texts and the one for the elaboration of the strategic action plan, will take turns to present the report and the documents of their respective commission.

After quickly adopting the working methodology, the basic texts, the different articles of the Statutes and the Constitution were examined and voted on progressively with, of course, debates, often heated, around certain articles. In the end, the Constitution and Statutes of RELAF were adopted unanimously.

Finally, a survey made it possible to collect several proposals, the synthesis of which gave the following vision: ***“Lasallians, Brothers, Sisters and Lay partners, committed to the transformation of lives in Africa through quality education with the preferential option for the poor, evangelisation and the promotion of justice”***. It is therefore on the basis of this vision that 4 working groups were formed around four strategic axes which are: Quality education; Evangelisation; Social justice, peace and ecological conversion; and Good governance, communication and resource management. Another proposal, and not the least, was added to these four priorities, namely the proposal relating to the welfare and social security of the Brothers and lay partners working in Lasallian ministries in Africa. Unanimously, the delegates adopted the final document with the five strategic axes. These will constitute the priorities of RELAF until the next 47th General Chapter.

By the afternoon of the third and final day, the two main objectives of the

Assembly had been achieved. Then followed the last purely ceremonial activities: words of encouragement from the Brother Vicar General, the expression of gratitude and thanks to all those who had participated in some way in the organisation of the 7th edition of the RELAF Assembly and the wishes for a safe journey home expressed to all.

The Regional Assembly for the Lasallian Educational Mission, for the 7th time in the history of RELAF, met its challenge. A joyful and fraternal atmosphere was in full swing, for some it was the joy of reunion; for others, it was discovery. During these three days of work, the delegates were able to exchange, pray together, share good times of meal and recreation, all under the motion of the Holy Spirit and the gracious and protective gaze of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and all the other Lasallian saints.

The RELAF delegates have set the stage, and the other Lasallians are invited, each in his or her own area, to become involved in the implementation of the strategic plan inspired by the acts of the 46th General Chapter.

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