



REIMAGINING A BETTER WORLD

Recommendations and commitments of global youth
towards the Economy of Francesco

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the twentieth century's most prescient and profound thinkers, Thomas Berry in his essay - *The World Of Wonder* says, "*We now find ourselves on a devastated continent where nothing is holy, nothing is sacred. We no longer have a world of inherent value, no world of wonder, no untouched, unspoiled, unused world. We have used everything. By 'developing' the planet, we have been reducing the Earth to a new type of barrenness.*"

A reimagining of economic, social, environmental, and political relationships is given focus as the cries of the earth and the poor grow louder with the emergence of COVID-19. These are cries heard throughout our common home, asking for peace, hope and urgency as we struggle to respond to the interrelated crises that the pandemic has laid bare and exacerbates.

As young people seeking change, we have come together in this dialogue process towards the Economy of Francesco to create this document that expresses our thoughts, ideas, and dreams. The time of COVID-19 is more than a crisis. It is an opportunity to pause, reflect, and reimagine our shared future. The need to act together and rethink development has never been more urgent.

Though we are of different cultures and perspectives, we share a passion to care for our common home, and a calling to act for better change through the spirit of *Laudato Si'* that shines light on our interconnectedness. By coming together, we emphasise the importance of embracing interdependence, kinship, and the common good on a global scale from a discourse that places importance on valuing hyperindividualism and independence.

Presented here is the outcome of our collective reimagining of development that spanned over two very fruitful and joyous months, and are informed by *Laudato Si'*, the *Laudato Si'* Goals, *Querida Amazonia*, and the Sustainable Development Goals. These are not only aspirations, but commitments of the heart made in solidarity for a better and more beautiful world.

II. REIMAGINING DEVELOPMENT

These reimaginings are organized in terms of the Thematic Villages of the Economy of Francesco that featured prominently in our dialogue process - (1) CO2 of Inequality, (2) Life and Life-style, and (3) Policies for Happiness.

CO2 OF INEQUALITY

We live in a world of growing inequalities. The most researched inequalities today relate to economic variables. However, economic inequalities can both cause and be determined by many other types of imbalances, such as those related to health and life expectancy, educational achievement, well-being, functioning and capabilities, social support, access to resources, ecological footprint, democratic power, human rights and gender empowerment.

To build an economy that is regenerative and inclusive “by design” and that no longer produces even a single victim – a single person cast aside – we must first understand the aetiology of inequalities and then imagine an economic system that inspires and facilitates Integral Human Development, human connectivity and empathy.

“A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. It is clearly inconsistent to combat trafficking in endangered species while remaining completely indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about the poor, or undertaking to destroy another human being deemed unwanted...Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.” (Laudato Si’ 91)

Empowerment through education

An education that speaks both to the mind and the heart, and translates into actions has a transformative power. Possibilities are opened, realities are laid bare and one is inspired to dream for the greater good. Its foundational role in empowering the youth cannot be overstated.

We imagine an Education system that:

1. Integrates integral ecology as a core component of curricula and programs across all levels. It is critical that this begins at an early age to more effectively influence values formation, and that families are involved to encourage dialogue and change in the household.
2. Encourages learning experiences outside the classroom so that students are exposed to, and can engage with broader realities at the frontlines and the margins.

3. Seeks ways for students to engage with realities of inequality and injustice in order to broaden their worldview, strengthen their sense of common responsibility, and to foster empathy with others experiencing hardship.
4. Highlights the interconnectedness of all life, both the “good” and the “bad”, and intergenerational responsibility for a shared future.
5. Capitalizes on formal, non-formal, and informal modes of education in raising knowledge and awareness around the environment, and teaching skills that contribute to a greener society.
6. Leverages social media as an avenue/tool for learning and inspiring action.
7. Encourages platforms where students can engage in genuine dialogues, sharing stories, communicating best practices, and promoting solidarity and action.
8. Explores ways to promote learning with, from, and for those at the margins.
9. Listens and seeks to accompany the broader community of which it is part, including families, parishes, and other local groups.
10. Promotes innovative ideas and thinking outside the box to better utilize limited resources.
12. Integrates an understanding of contemporary Indigenous cultures and knowledge so as to encourage compassion and collaboration between global Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Ideally, this understanding will be specific to each region and the relevant Indigenous culture.
13. Localizes environmental education in the context present in each region and uses languages and symbolisms that are appropriate to their culture. This will foster inclusivity in sharing knowledge contextualized at a local level.
15. Is equally accessible across genders.
16. Encourages community entrepreneurship.
17. Creates meaningful education that translates into economic or vocational opportunities for the individual and community.

Social inclusion and global equality

This is the time to listen to the cries of the earth and the poor, and move away from unsustainable prosperity. The message of inclusivity resonates. We acknowledge that we are part of the problem, but we also know that we are part of the solution. Involvement in political processes and empathy for others are essential parts of bringing about transformative change. With this is the understanding that politics, economics, governance, and ultimately development, go hand-in hand as one integral system.

We imagine a Political and Governance system that:

1. Actively includes and listens to all people, recognizing the inherent dignity and value of each person, and allows them higher levels of participation or ownership of programs
2. Considers and respects the voices of the youth, indigenous peoples, women and girls, and the marginalized in decision-making processes

3. Integrates principles of sustainable development into its priorities and policies, drawing from local perspectives and realities. The roots of transformation must start from the ground.
4. Strives for peace and reconciliation, and respects and protects the human rights of all.
5. Promotes fairness, equity, justice, cooperation, and collaboration
6. Creates safe and open platforms for the youth and the politically marginalized to become more knowledgeable about voting, governance, and political exercises and rights that affect local to national decision making. It is a moral obligation to be involved in these matters.
7. Makes decisions based on science and a moral compass, recognising that human and environmental wellbeing is equally as important as a strong economy.
8. Invests in avenues for sustainable growth, innovation, new industries, and scientific research.
9. Respects all cultures and faiths.
10. Implements progressive policies wherein the economically advantaged aid in the promotion of justice, peace, and sustainable action within their communities and world.
11. Does not focus on the material and economic growth of itself but rather the growth of happiness of people.
12. Strengthens the implementation of policies for sustainable development, particularly those that target climate change mitigation and adaptation, and disaster risk reduction and management.
13. Opens its borders to migrants and all those in need of shelter due to climate change impacts, disasters, and geopolitical tensions.
14. Recognizes that farmers, fisherfolk, and frontline workers form the backbone of society, and deserve fairness and justice as professionals that are critical to life.
15. Promotes sustainable growth at the margins by linking agriculture with entrepreneurship.
16. Recognizes the significant contributions of internal and external migrant labor populations, and supports them in their economic, social, and political endeavours.

LIFE AND LIFE-STYLE

A way of life – not “away” from life

"We need to correct models of growth [...] guaranteeing respect for the environment, openness to life, concern for the family, social equality, dignity of workers and the rights of future generations." In these words, Pope Francis asks for more responsible behaviour in terms of consumption, production and decision-making with the aim of ensuring a worthwhile life for everyone.

We will discuss and experience the contribution each one of us – whether citizen, company, organization, politician, etc. – to combat the culture of waste and propose new ways of life. This is linked intimately to the debate regarding measurement of wealth and well-being.

“The limits which a healthy, mature and sovereign society must impose are those related to foresight and security, regulatory norms, timely enforcement, the elimination of corruption, effective responses to undesired side-effects of production processes, and appropriate intervention where potential or uncertain risks are involved. There is a growing jurisprudence dealing with the reduction of pollution by business activities. But political and institutional frameworks do not exist simply to avoid bad practice, but also to promote best practice, to stimulate creativity in seeking new solutions and to encourage individual or group initiatives.” (Laudato Si’ 177)

Responsible production and consumption

Temperance in consumption, and opposition to avarice are key in addressing deprivation of others’ enjoyment over the bounties of the Earth. Young people have the capability to influence markets and supply chains. For example, we may choose public over private modes of transportation when possible, as well as be more mindful of what we consume and purchase. On the other side of the coin is the role of businesses and the larger financial systems that influence economic directions.

We imagine a Business and Financial system that:

1. Accounts and takes responsibility for the environmental and human impacts of its actions
2. Promotes a more sustainable economy through greener jobs and practices, and provides options and innovations for a just ecological transition to secure affected livelihoods, and a more circular economy
3. Divests from and discourages unsustainable practices that harm society and the environment such as the fossil fuel industry.
4. Follows the triple bottom line of People-Planet-Profit, and integrates this principle in all plans and decisions.
5. Listens to all stakeholders, and to its employees and workers who form the backbone of the overall economy.
6. Provides just and fair working conditions for employees and workers.
7. Respects and promotes traditional and culture-based livelihoods, and a healthier relationship with community and land.
8. Advocates for and works in harmony with those who are marginalized, no longer taking advantage of the people, environment, and materials used in the production of goods and services. Since we live on a finite planet, our common home and its resources cannot be seen as a means to an end but rather a tool that aids us in connecting with one another.

9. Acknowledges where there is a lack of women representation, and creates policies and initiatives that seek to actively include women by giving them more financial autonomy, and providing training for women in business/finance.

10. Allows for representation and organization of labor from all classes, and acts on their stated needs

POLICIES FOR HAPPINESS

What is the purpose of human life that economic policies should endorse and promote? If it is happiness, how does self-reported happiness compare with other measures of well-being such as capabilities, human flourishing, opportunities, freedom and so on? As we learn more and more how relationships are key to happiness, should economics abandon its methodology based on individual success and consider also the family and other communitarian dimensions of human life as legitimate agents of social welfare? And finally, what are the socio-economic policies that foster all these dimensions?

This village will explore new and more happiness-friendly ways of assessing, measuring and pursuing well-being in worldwide practices and public policies both from macro and microeconomic perspectives.

“Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.” (Laudato Si’ 202)

Quality of Life

What does it mean to be happy? To live a good life? There is often a misconception that development means profit and economic growth. Money is of course part of the equation. However, there are other, arguably more important elements that give life a fuller meaning and enjoyment. These realities are well documented today with rising cases of unhappiness, mental health challenges among the youth, and anxieties about the health of our common home.

We imagine Quality of Life Measures that:

1. Put the human being at the center, and emphasizes “Gross Domestic Happiness” rather than Gross Domestic Product
2. Ensure accessibility to promote enjoyment of goods and services
3. Safeguard the planet and its resources for the enjoyment of current and future generations

4. Consider diversity of cultures, faiths, genders, and perspectives, recognizing that “one size does not fit all” in defining *buen vivir* (good living).
5. Encourage community and solidarity
6. Promote the importance of aspects of life that cannot be monetised, such as social connection and inclusion, safety, freedom from discrimination.
7. Propose new ways of thinking and defining concepts of ‘wealth’ and ‘poverty’ beyond material and monetary terms.

III. COMMITTING TO A COMMON COVENANT: CONCLUSIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

Reimagining development is a reimagining of our relationships as a global community. In responding to the changes of the times, we are dreaming of a new world – a new common covenant – that is not only between God and people, but between God, people, and all of Creation. As young people we aspire to lead this new transformation of our thoughts, processes, actions and communities towards a more just and sustainable world.

We continue to be inspired and guided by the hopes embodied in Laudato Si’, Querida Amazonia, Fratelli Tutti, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Laudato Si’ Goals. Of course, we are also deeply moved by the process of sharing we have undergone, where we learned and felt each other's realities and challenges.

Moving forward towards healing our broken world and fractured relationships, we commit to renewed personal attitudes and a sacred agreement of the heart among young people. To realize this, these are the action points we will take:

1. To advocate for educational policies and actions that aim towards inclusive development and empowerment of people and society.
2. To move towards a global economic-environmental structure that invites and listens to the cries of the earth and the poor.
3. To build a more inclusive and equal world that leaves no one behind, and puts justice and the common good at the core of its economic, social, and cultural values.
4. To practice self-responsibility as empowered citizens, acknowledging that our personal choices affect our neighbors and environment, and to hold businesses accountable for their practices.
5. To lead the way towards more sustainable businesses that emphasize cooperation over competition as part of its core values.
6. To share and enable the joys of *buen vivir*, of living as a community that values solidarity, simplicity, community involvement, and cooperative-participatory action.
7. To shift discourse on happiness away from monetary and materialistic measures with the help of indigenous leadership, as their cultures showcase

ways of life that are closer to nature, value the richness of simple lifestyles, and promote community.

Furthermore, acknowledging that the realization of these action points calls for a long-term collaborative process rather than a series of singular acts, we shall communicate *Reimagining a Better World* as an example of a process for change and solidarity that is possible in schools, student councils, universities, civil society, and governments. This includes translating the recommendations into Spanish and other languages, and engaging in shared actions and events. We shall also continue to dialogue with each other as a global community of youth in planning and implementing meaningful actions from local-global levels. Through this, we seek the realization and expression of our commitments, such as campaigns to communicate our recommendations, educational discussions within our organizations, contribute to policies, and to work together with groups like the UN Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change to strengthen climate actions towards COP26 and beyond.

Finally, we propose that the Economy of Francesco Central Committee explore the creation of a **Global “Youth Hub” or “Youth Task Force”** with formal representation in and support by the Vatican. This Youth Hub/Task Force shall be led by the youth, and will serve as the formal body to listen to, and facilitate sustained dialogue with the youth of all faiths. Our common covenant calls for urgent participatory action, care for neighbors, and faith amidst suffering. Moving forward, this would significantly contribute to our deeper discernment, and welcome more young people in our growing family – a true Economy of Francesco that is reimagining and building a better world.

ANNEX 1: PARTICIPANTS

Name	Country	Institution/Organization
Teriza Mir	Australia	Macquarie University
Rebecca Rathbone	Canada	Laudato Si' Generation / Development & Peace – Caritas Canaa
Noelie Kem	Chad	Centres Sèvres
Santiago Corrales	Colombia	Universidad Militar Nueva Granada
Francisco Martinez	Colombia	Federación Latinoamericana de Colegios de la Compañía de Jesús (FLACSI)
Sladana Lovrić	Croatia	European Laudato Si' Alliance
Apollinaire Muendo	Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)	Centre Culturel Boboto
Giogrio Gotra	Ecuador	CIDSE / Laudato Si' Generation
Abigail Grabaa	Ghana	Don Bosco Youth Network – West Africa
Devopriya Dutta	India	Tarumitra
Jill Mota	India	St. Xavier's College, Mumbai
Zubia Shaikh	India	St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Mumbai
Archana Soreng	India	Vasundhara – Odisha / United Nations Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change
Joshua Martin Vaz	India	Don Bosco College, Panjim
Shifa Zoya	India	Stranded Workers Action Network, India
Marco Fragapane	Italy	Office of the Assistant Economer General of the Salesians
Tyrique Jonas	Italy	Laudato Si' Generation
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Diana Arenas	Mexico	Salesian Youth Movement - Mexico
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Thembaletu Siyesi	South Africa	Salesian Life Choices
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ANNEX 2: ORGANIZERS

Reimagining Development: Youth Perspectives for a Better World was a global dialogue series that brought together young people from international faith-based networks and organizations, seeking to contribute to discourse and actions for a paradigm shift in development. The three organizers are Ecojesuit, the Don Bosco Green Alliance, and Living Laudato Si' Philippines. Brief descriptions of each are provided below:

- Ecojesuit is the global ecology network of Jesuits and partners, seeking collaborations for integral ecology. The network facilitates dialogue and engagements to reconcile with God, with one another, and with Creation, addressing the broad call for action of Laudato Si' and the urgency for a just global transformation in care for the Earth and the most vulnerable. This involves Jesuit social, educational, and pastoral institutes, collaborations with other religious congregations, the Church, the scientific community, faith-based organizations and movements, civil society, Indigenous peoples, and those seeking the common good.
- The Don Bosco Green Alliance is an international collective of young people from Salesian Family institutions & organizations that contribute to global environmental action, thought and policy. The Alliance especially focuses on creating the next generation of environmental citizens and leaders to ensure a planet that is safe for all life on Earth. We also focus on engagement with youth regarding these environmental issues, as they will be the generation most highly affected by the climate crisis and other environmental issues.
- Living Laudato Si' Philippines is an inter-faith Catholic lay-initiated movement calling on Philippine financial institutions to divest from coal plants and other environmentally harmful activities. The movement is anchored towards its mandate to promote sustainable development and counter environmental degradation. It is a mirror of Pope Francis' visions to save the earth through the strength of collective action, calling on all to divest for sustainability and invest in our Common Home.