



# Caring for Communities and Creation

A JCAP Flagship Project

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## Background

In the [JCAP 2021-2025 plan](#), we “commit ourselves to the urgent call of poverty and reconciliation with creation in Asia Pacific” in collaboration with others especially the youth and sharing our gift of Ignatian spirituality. Towards making this commitment a concrete reality, the JCAP Major Superiors Assembly approved the “Caring for Communities and Creation” flagship project last Jan 2022. The following provides details on the project and the proposed first steps that provinces and regions can take.

## What is this project all about?

This project calls for each province and region to step up its involvement with ecology and the poor through a three-pronged approach: (1) Transitioning to Cleaner Energy, (2) Youth Leading the Future, and (3) Strengthening Local Communities. To facilitate this, relevant expertise in JCAP will be pooled together for the benefit of each unit, and networks will be developed to share experiences, facilitate mutual learning, and explore concrete collaborations. At the same time, each province and region will endeavor to engage not only those ministering directly in the social or youth sectors but all its members, thus promoting a more province-wide socio-ecological engagement. Inter-sectoral collaboration, for instance between social, pastoral, intellectual, education, and spirituality apostolates, would be especially fruitful. Just as important is the promotion of our own conversion, a theme central in the UAPs and the JCAP Apostolic Plan. To this end, expertise and resources in spirituality and formation in the Conference could also be tapped.

Where appropriate, each province and region can build on what it is already doing in any of the above three areas (see section C below for some existing examples). Whilst remaining relevant to its local context, ways to further step up or fine-tune its efforts can be discerned. Additionally, new initiatives can be started in response to emerging needs.

## A. Vision-Mission Statement

These formulations already express the desires for the Conference. However, they are still a work-in-progress and revisions might still occur as the project unfolds.

**Vision:** A Jesuit Conference wherein the different provinces of Asia Pacific, from their own particular social and ecological contexts, are actively collaborating together in addressing the urgent concerns of the poor and the planet, according to the principles of *Laudato Si'* and the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus.

**Mission:** To engage the different communities and institutions within JCAP, facilitating social and ecological conversion in our response to the pressing issues of poverty and ecology, leading to concrete changes in our lifestyles and ways of proceeding, especially for the next 3 years.

## B. Key points about the three approaches

### 1. Transitioning to Cleaner Energy: To reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 50% by 2030, achieved through a) reduction of energy use, and b) shifting from fossil fuel dependency



Carbon emissions affect our planet significantly. They are one of the most significant contributors to global warming and the climate crisis. Many of our poor sisters and brothers live in areas particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. In the cities of Asia Pacific we may not feel climate change directly, but the poor in our region are already suffering from its drastic impact, particularly in their livelihoods.

Yet there is still hope. We can do something to minimize the impacts of carbon emissions. The highest contributors to carbon emissions are our activities related to energy (36013.52 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e), agriculture (5795.51 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e), land-use change and forestry (produced 3217.07 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e), among others. COP 26 has set a target of 50% reduction of carbon emissions by 2030 and Pope Francis has urged everyone to support these efforts.

We are called to “recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production, and consumption, in order to combat this warming...” [LS 23] and this document hopes to begin concrete changes starting at Jesuit communities within JCAP. Fr General’s letter on poverty and the call for a simpler lifestyle also support the reduction in energy consumption. Poverty is not only “less things” but also a sacrifice of “comfort” or “luxury” for the common or greater good.

**Focus:** Lifestyles of Jesuit communities and operations of our institutions

#### Areas to look into:

- a) Travel: reduction of flights; reduction of land travel by our own private vans or cars; encourage cycling, walking, online meetings
- b) Houses/buildings: move to renewable energy; find ways to reduce energy usage, starting with energy-intensive appliances such as clothes dryers
- c) Activities: zero-waste meetings
- d) Food: more plant-based foods, less meat consumption; encourage healthier meals; can show how unhealthy food affects community members which translates to increased health care costs of the province; contribute by growing own vegetables

#### Steps:

- a) Identify: measure/quantify baseline footprint
- b) Share: disseminate information to all members of the community, can compare with other communities too, also with the provincial so that support and decisions can be made
- c) Act: perhaps each community or ministry can assess how best to engage with the selected approach and what specific actions to take
- d) Reflect and Evaluate (then repeat cycle): the assigned “Laudato Senior” can give a periodic report to the community and see how adjustments can be made; together with this report, the community can engage in prayer, reflection, and sharing so as to deepen the process of ecological conversion

## 2. Youth Leading the Future: To accompany the young towards ecological conversion through an Ignatian retreat and the pursuit of socio- ecological projects of their own



Young people face much turmoil in their lives today: the effects of the pandemic, unprecedented social change, political upheaval, and what could be the biggest emergency of this age, systemic ecological collapse. The youth are already experiencing anger and anxiety about the environmental crisis, and trauma brought about by the climate crisis.

As inheritors of this massive problem, they need to be equipped on all levels to deal with a bleak future on this planet. They need to learn how to battle the indifference and inaction of generations before them, and unlearn the harmful habits of disconnection from and abuse of the natural world. Addressing the spiritual and psychological dimensions underlying the ecological crisis might be a good starting point.

**Focus:** Youth in schools, parishes, youth ministries (perhaps 16-25 year olds)

### Areas to look into:

- a) Ignatian Spirituality and science: the retreat apostolate can come up with a draft framework/model that incorporates scientific reports, pressing ecological issues, and their current social impacts into a retreat experience for the youth; it is important that an experience of nature, preferably a forest or the sea, is part of the retreat itself
- b) Schools, parishes, youth ministries: they can adapt the framework/model to their own context and to their own youth groups
- c) Resulting projects: can be individual or group, with a broad range of possible actions, curated together with the team in-charge of this approach; the projects are as important as the retreat because both complement each other on the path of ecological conversion

### Steps:

- a) Retreat: a first batch will be carried out in one particular place where a retreat experience can be arranged using the created framework/model, which can then be evaluated and then later shared with other places for replication; at least in the initial stages, participation should be voluntary and not required
- b) Projects: the youth groups should be guided in choosing their projects and see to it that their projects are sound and have good chances of success; more important than the size or scale of the project is that individuals have the chance to meaningfully participate
- c) Reflection: this step is important as it brings together the fruits of the retreat and their projects; allows for evaluation of their projects and creates the opportunity for adjustments; this could be scheduled at the end of a specified time period and reflect back on the fruits of the retreat; the goal of ecological conversion is not only centered on the retreat, but a process equally involving the aspects of retreat-projects-reflection

### 3. Strengthening Local Communities: To help build resilience and strengthen local communities through partnerships with Jesuit ministries using nature-based solutions



Our local community partners are among the most vulnerable sector of our society — indigenous communities, farmers, fisherfolk, urban poor. With long-drawn COVID-19 pandemic, the climate emergency declared in 2019, and continued worsening of the Earth's vital signs, the situation of local communities has become even worse.

“The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: ‘Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest.’” [LS 48]

Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) work with nature to address societal challenges, providing benefits for both human well-being and biodiversity. They are actions that involve protection, restoration or management of natural or semi-natural ecosystems. They support biodiversity and are led by local communities.

**Focus:** Local communities such as farmers, fisherfolk, urban poor, indigenous communities

#### Areas to look into:

- a) Conservation and reforestation: for local communities in lowland, upland, or coastal areas whose lives and livelihoods are intimately connected to the forest, assistance can be given for them to enhance the health of the forests on which they depend
- b) Use of agroecology such as the establishment of food forests: for schools, rural and urban communities who may have communal space in their immediate vicinity
- c) The establishment of marine protected areas: for fisherfolk communities
- d) Other forms of nature-based solutions

#### Steps:

- a) Partnership: Jesuit apostolate may establish a formal collaboration with a local community, much like the JRS 40-4-40 project in 2021
- b) Accompaniment: this is the first and most fundamental step; through accompaniment, the needs of the local community can be revealed, and appropriate support can be offered; moreover, the project is not just about the environment but also about the local community and its relationships, resilience, capacity, culture, and spirituality
- c) Appropriate intervention: it is important that NBS is localized since every location, every context is different; the specific NBS is dependent on the problems faced by the communities, the ecological setting, local capacity and willingness and support of the local government

#### C. Existing projects within JCAP that are good starting points

Certainly, there are many initiatives across the Conference that have been addressing poverty and ecology for several years now. It is the goal of this flagship project to stimulate those ministries, to move further forward, and to share their learnings

and resources with others across the region. Some examples of existing ministries that have already done great work in the past are given below. In our spirit of *magis*, there is always room for growth and improvement in addressing the needs of our time.

1. **On Energy:** In the Philippines, Fr Marlito Ocon SJ had successfully facilitated the installation of photovoltaic cells to generate solar energy at the chaplaincy of the Philippine General Hospital in Manila and also for the buildings of the primary and tertiary education levels of the Ateneo de Zamboanga University. Also, the Ateneo de Davao University uses active solar energy to power a good amount of their electrical requirements.

Growing and eating healthier food are also factors that affect our consumption of energy. One way of reducing our take of energy is to help produce our own food, or at least our own vegetables, instead of purchasing them from the supermarket. Some examples are the a) [community garden](#) of the Arrupe International Residence, and the b) [Community Vegetable Garden](#) of the Jesuit Residence, both located within the campus of the Ateneo de Manila University, and c) the [Dewanto House](#) in Jakarta, Indonesia. These gardens are tended by the resident Jesuits who do not practice the use of synthetic chemicals.

2. **On Youth:** Xavier High School in Chuuk, Micronesia started a “Laudato Si’ Club” for the students. Part of their future plans include the building of a simple greenhouse to grow vegetables. A plan for a mini-retreat and workshop are in the works for the youth of nearby Sapuk, focusing on Care for our Common Home.

In Australia, Dr Peter Saunders began a retreat program called “Being with God in Nature,” and has gained a following. This April, part of the Australian province’s offering for the Ignatian Year is the [International Ignatian Ecospiritual Conference 2022](#), billed as “an invitation to ecological conversion.”

Xavier Learning Community in Chiang Rai, Thailand has started the [Xavier Sustainable Agriculture project](#) during the pandemic. It supplies students and staff with fresh vegetables, while teaching them cooperation and the importance of food security in uncertain times.

3. **On Local Communities:** To mark the 40th anniversary of JRS, the Asia Pacific team initiated the [40-4-40: Growing Canopies, Strengthening Communities](#) project which aimed to support local communities by promoting the planting or preservation of 40,000 trees across different countries in Asia Pacific. This was a collaborative project between JRS, RWC (Reconciliation With Creation), JCIM (Jesuit Companions in Indigenous Ministry) and MAGIS (Youth Ministry), whose main purpose was to strengthen the social and ecological systems of indigenous communities that depend on the sustainability of their natural resources for survival.

In Chiang Mai, Thailand, there exists the [Emmaus Farm](#) which was initially established to help former inmates successfully reintegrate into society. Run by a small team of lay volunteers, today the farm has expanded to become a place where all kinds of people, not just those once incarcerated, are welcome to have a personal encounter with God.

#### **D. The CCC (Caring for Communities and Creation) Coordinating Team**

For this flagship project, Fr Tony Moreno SJ has formed the coordinating team to be composed of Louie Bacomo, Vids Gornez SJ, Christina Kheng, Gabby Lamug-Nañawa SJ (coordinator), Ria Limjap, Ed Quinnan SJ, Kath Rosic, and Adri Suyadi SJ. The role of the coordinating team is to discern and articulate the objectives and parameters of this project, animate participation, accompany provinces and regions, and facilitate networking and collaboration. The main character of the project is that it be inspired with Ignatian Spirituality and is able to facilitate socio-ecological conversion within the Conference. The coordinating team reports to the president of JCAP.

Aside from the coordinating team, each province is asked to assign an official point person for the project. He/she will be the point person of the province with whom the coordinating team will mainly relate. It would be helpful if the point person is or has been engaged in a ministry that is relevant to any one of the approaches of the flagship project.

#### **E. First steps of action by provinces and regions**

The first decisions are to be made by the respective major superiors of Asia Pacific. When not indicated, please refer to Fr Tony Moreno SJ for the deadlines related to the items below.

1. Discern and assign a suitable point person who will represent the province or region for the CCC project. Please send his/her name and contact information to Fr Tony Moreno SJ soon after the project has been announced. The coordinating team will then be meeting with the assigned point persons of the different provinces or regions.
2. Disseminate this information to your member Jesuits and mission partners, and encourage them to discern what the province/region can do in this project. For instance, which of the three approaches do they think the province/region should initially focus on? Why? What existing initiatives can be highlighted and built upon? What new efforts must be made? What is the urgent call for the province/region with regard to poverty and ecology in its local context? How can the engagement and conversion be embraced by all members? What inhibits us? How has the Spirit of God been moving in our province/region?

To aid prayer and reflection on these questions, members could first be encouraged to read or watch the videos on [Fr General's message to encourage participation in the Laudato Si' platform](#) and [Fr General's letter on "Our Vow of Poverty in the Following of Jesus Poor and Humble" \(2021/15\)](#).

3. After having met together with the point person, do discern and decide on the concrete engagements of your province/region with the approaches of the flagship project, bearing in mind that these are initial plans and will be fine-tuned as the work develops.