

## **Congregation Leadership Team Statement on Edmund Rice Mission**

### ***Edmund Rice Mission today***

For over 200 years, people all over the world have been educated in the tradition of Edmund Rice. As Christian Brothers and Edmund Rice people, we are forming together a global network of educators and schools, colleges and educational projects that are transforming countless lives.

Like all religious orders and congregations within the Catholic Church, the Christian Brothers have been in a process of renewal for the past 50 years since the Second Vatican Council called us to explore deeply our reason for being, and to assess the contribution we make to the changing needs of the world around us.

It is our conviction that, in deep listening to the groaning earth and her suffering people, we experience God calling us to be agents of change, hope and transformation. We also believe that in our awareness of our own brokenness, God calls us to be compassionate people and, where necessary, to transform old structures, cultural mind-sets and outdated practices, so as to usher in a new way of being brother and sister for the world.

### ***Our Way into the Future***

In response to this call in 2012, we Christian Brothers adopted a major new programme of renewal and transformation called *Our Way into the Future*. This programme brings together the key dimensions of our lives as Brothers, addressing the need for a deeper spirituality, challenging us to a renewed commitment to community life, and initiating a renewed approach to ministry into the future.

### ***Edmund Rice Mission***

At the heart of this new approach to Edmund Rice Mission is our Gospel focus on the liberation of people and communities from poverty and injustice. It is a mission embraced by our brothers and sisters, Edmund Rice people, working together in ministries around the world. In 2015, we agreed on a unified approach to Edmund Rice Mission<sup>1</sup> which took as its inspiration the legacy of Blessed Edmund Rice, who responded to the marginalised people of his time.

We recognise that the best way to bring about lasting change is by working together, and so our aim is to build meaningful partnerships and relationships with local communities. We strive not only for a transformation of the lives of those people living in poverty, but also, by journeying together, we are ultimately opening ourselves to being transformed in our way of living and thinking. Through such *mutual transformation*, together we have the opportunity to enrich all our lives and become a unified force for healthy change.

Maintaining a compassionate presence and walking in solidarity with those with whom we live and work, therefore, is fundamental to Edmund Rice Mission today. This allows trust to be built and equal relationships to form, and it allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the reality of the challenges faced by those most marginalised. Our presence in local areas also acts as a catalyst among the people so that they may realise their own power, resilience, and giftedness. Through engagement with the community, people are empowered to recognise and respond to their needs and those of the environment, in a spirit of collaboration and collective responsibility.

### ***Journeying Together Clusters***

Last year the Christian Brothers established a cluster of new Brothers' communities in Western Zambia, an area with immense social problems, where three out of every four people live in extreme poverty. There, eighteen brothers are living amongst the local communities of Mongu,

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<sup>1</sup> Strategic Development Framework for Edmund Rice Mission, September 2015.

Luampa, Limulunga, and Senanga. They are learning the local language, Silozi, and are becoming integrated in the local communities, listening to their concerns, and entering into discussions with local people to identify some of the root causes of problems. This is the first phase of what has become known as our Journeying Together programme and will lead to responses from a rights' based approach and the establishment of sustainable development projects by the communities.

The next Cluster of communities begins in 2017 in the Assam and Meghalaya regions of northeast India.

Whilst they are in new regions, both of these clusters are situated in countries where the Brothers have a long-term presence and we are inspired by the support they have been receiving from the local leadership teams in Zambia and India.

In addition to the work of these new Clusters, many other established ministries throughout the world are working to re-align their approach with the Mission Strategic Development Framework and through the process of community engagement become impactful development based projects for the communities with whom they engage.

### ***Edmund Rice Mission Support***

A number of international groups and bodies, and countless individuals (Brothers and lay colleagues), are working to support Edmund Rice Mission into the future:

- *Governing Bodies and Leadership Teams* for Edmund Rice Mission who bear responsibility for the governance of ministries in their respective jurisdictions.
- *The Transition Support Team* - a group of six Brothers who are charged with the responsibility of establishing three new Journeying Together clusters of communities before 2020.
- *The Schools networks and Trusts* around the world and the Edmund Rice Education Beyond Borders initiative, an international network of Edmund Rice schools seeking to promote global solidarity and offer a transformational education for justice and liberation.
- *Edmund Rice International*, a non-government agency based in Geneva which works through advocacy to promote and protect human rights and the environment.
- *Mission Sustainability Working Party*, a collaborative forum involving Brothers and development agencies, is focused on sustainability of our mission into the future.
- *Mission Capacity Support Team*, a group of mission personnel from around the world who focus on building capabilities, systems and development expertise within the field for Edmund Rice Mission.
- Edmund Rice development agencies (*Edmund Rice Development* in Europe, *Edmund Rice Foundation* in Australia) who collaborate to support the sustainability of Edmund Rice Mission by sourcing funding, building donor engagement, and working with their partners in mission to improve capacity. These agencies also help guide our mission through the increasingly complex regulatory and governance standards of today.
- And of course, the many hundreds of inspiring people and teams within the schools, projects and ministries that give Edmund Rice Mission endless life.

As Congregation Leadership Team we offer these groups and bodies our full support and deepest respect. We are humbled and honoured to work alongside them and look forward to our continued journey as we strive together for a brighter tomorrow and a better world for all.