

UNLAD International, Inc.

A decade of helping eradicate poverty through livelihood and education

By TRUE SANTOS-MATIAS



Officers and volunteer workers of UNLAD International, Inc. convened at the Philippine Arena on March 17, 2023 as part of a series of celebratory activities in connection with the organization's first decade of establishment.

IN A BIRD'S EYE VIEW of the issues besetting the world at present, poverty remains among the most pressing ones. Inequality, conflicts, lack of education, and the Covid-19 pandemic are just some of the factors fueling this global problem (*concern.net*). Efforts to alleviate poverty are continually being exerted by governments and other institutions. Still, the bitter truth remains that “more than 700 million people—or 10 percent of the global population—still live in extreme poverty” (*unglobalcompact.org*).

With the noble aim to help address this worldwide problem, the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ), through the leadership of Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, the Executive Minister, initiates projects to generate livelihood for more people. For the last ten years, the Unified Livelihood Advocacy for Development (UNLAD) International, Incorporated has served as the Church's charity arm in aiding people in the fight against poverty through livelihood and education. UNLAD is a non-stock and nonprofit organization that



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In commemoration of UNLAD's 10th anniversary, a series of Care for Humanity and Evangelical Missions were held in (A) Leyte, (B) Rizal, (C) Cavite, (D) Nueva Ecija, and (E) South Cotabato.

(G-I) UNLAD Volunteers' Night held at the Philippine Arena on March 17, 2023

provides livelihood and skills development and entrepreneurship programs, aiming to equip individuals with tools to fight poverty and sustain growth thereafter.

Establishment and expansion

Even during the early years of the Church, Brother Felix Y. Manalo, God's Messenger in these last days, had seen the need of the brethren to have alternative sources of income aside from their respective jobs. Thus, training programs for sewing and barbering were conducted.

To further increase the knowledge and skills needed by the brethren to sustain their livelihood, in 1972, Brother Eraño G. Manalo, then Executive Minister of the Church, established the New Era Training Center in Tayuman, Manila, which later on transferred its office to Palanca Street, Manila.

Sister Anita P. Santos,
(1948–2021)
UNLAD's first Chairperson





UNLAD International's livelihood centers: (A) Fit to U Alteration Shop; (B-D) UNLAD Food Group; (E) UNLAD Garments; (F) Central Recreation and Fitness Center; (G) UNLAD Trade Center as part of UNLAD Sourcing and Management Services; (H) Haircuts by UNLAD

Following the initiatives of the Messenger and of Brother Eraño Manalo, in 2001, Brother Eduardo Manalo, then Deputy Executive Minister, launched a livelihood program dubbed “Social Development Services” (SDS). This program continued upon the designation of Brother Angelo Eraño V. Manalo as the Coordinator of the Christian Family Organizations (CFO) in 2010.

To broaden the reach of the program for livelihood and to help more people across the globe, Brother Eduardo Manalo spearheaded the establishment of UNLAD, through Brother Angelo Eraño Manalo, together with Brother Glicerio B. Santos Jr. and Sister Anita P. Santos. They helped conceptualize and launch the UNLAD International, Inc., which was formally registered with the Philippine government on March 17, 2013.

Since its establishment, UNLAD has been instrumental in providing thousands of people with

livelihood, trainings, and development programs. It has also established multiple livelihood centers that give financial assistance and other benefits. Among these are UNLAD Garments, UNLAD Food Group, Haircuts by UNLAD, Officially UNLAD Merchandise, Fit to U Alteration Shop, and Sourcing and Management Services.

Extending a helping hand

When Typhoon Yolanda (international name: *Haiyan*) struck Philippine soil on November 8, 2013, more than 13 million people in 44 provinces were affected. “In terms of casualties, it is among the deadliest typhoons that have hit the Philippines. Typhoon Yolanda has left more than 5,600 dead, 1,700 missing, and 26,000 injured in central Philippines ... It has damaged more than a million houses” (*adb.org*). Among those greatly damaged was the coastal city of Tacloban, Leyte.



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In an effort to soften the blow of the said calamity, Brother Eduardo Manalo initiated to provide a source of livelihood not only for the brethren there but also for their fellowmen. Thus, in 2014, a housing project with an eco-farm and other livelihood facilities such as a garment factory, dried fish plant, and a mushroom house were built on the 3,000-hectare lot acquired by the Church in Alang-alang, Leyte. The said community was inaugurated on January 23, 2015 by the Executive Minister himself.

The problems brought about by poverty are not limited to the Philippine archipelago. In Africa, the effects of poverty were worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2022, around 460 million of its inhabitants were living below the extreme poverty line of \$1.90 a day (*statista.com*). As the Church continues to expand across Africa, the need to address the widespread poverty in the said continent also arises. UNLAD, with its close partnership with the Felix Y. Manalo Foundation, Inc., purchased and transformed large parcels of land into eco-farms. Currently, there are three eco-farms: 459 hectares in Salima, Malawi; 508 hectares in Ladybrand, and 2,800 hectares in Petrusburg—both in South

Through UNLAD International's sister organization, the Embrace Organization for the Differently Abled, the differently abled were given job opportunities through the (I-K) Embrace Cafe, and (L) Hearts and Hands Blind Massage Center.

(M) UNLAD International's main office currently situated at Unit 2 Central Park, Central Avenue, Quezon City



508-hectare ecofarm in
Ladybrand, South Africa
(first ecofarm outside the Philippines)



459-hectare ecofarm in
Salima, Malawi



Africa. In 2019, a garment factory was built and inaugurated in Qwaqwa, South Africa intended to provide job opportunities and skills development training for the people in the said region.

Embracing the differently abled

Out of love and compassion for the differently abled, the Church Administration approved the creation of an organization that will look after their welfare. In 2017, the Embrace Organization for the Differently Abled was formally established. Currently, Embrace Organization has four livelihood centers namely: Embrace Café, Embrace Bakeshop, Embrace Farm, and Hearts and Hands Blind Massage Center.

ABOUT THE WRITER

Sister True Santos-Matias is the Chairperson of UNLAD International Inc. and Embrace Organization for the Differently Abled.



2,800-hectare ecofarm in Petrusburg, South Africa



3,000-hectare ecofarm in Alangalang, Leyte, Philippines



As UNLAD marks its 10th anniversary, it continues to move forward with the help of the Almighty God through the support of the Church Administration. Despite global challenges and crisis brought about by the pandemic, UNLAD will never cease in its efforts to develop projects and programs for the Church Of Christ members and nonmembers alike as part of its noble advocacy to alleviate poverty. 🌱

Coordinators

Jensen Mañebog, Jerome Adonis Comaoay, Richard Palapar, and Jaypee Elmido



Garment factory in Owaqwa, South Africa