

Edmund Rice Mission



P Dean McGlaughlin
Executive Director
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“Now that Caplor Horizons have been working with our organisation on multiple endeavours and continuously since 2015 we have had time to reflect on the immense value of this long-term partnership and collaboration. Their contribution has been focussed on, but not limited to, our International Development work especially in Africa, Latin America and India.

Nothing previous written in our testimonial has been lacking in the last 2+ years and that is high praise since it encompasses the period when our world was impacted by the turmoil and unpredictability of the COVID Pandemic.

Four significant experiences of Caplor are in the forefront of our perceptions in reviewing the whole time of our engagement with them and the work of the last 2-3 years specifically.

During 2020 and 2021 Caplor Horizons collaborated with us around training and capacity building of personnel in key governance roles across the scope of our Development Mission. In characteristic fashion, this need was first appropriately identified, quantified and documented in collaboration with the governance personnel as the basis for developing a strategic approach to the delivery of highly relevant workshops based on best practice models of governance.

The outcomes of this program were substantial and highly regarded by the participants. People in such roles are generally time poor, thus to have an extended program which engaged them over the course of a full year (**? ...Rosie or Fiona please advise**) and to have it so highly commended by the participants, is indicative of Caplor’s capacity to design programs in response to need and to deliver them in ways which maintained the enthusiasm and commitment of the recipients. In that, Caplor’s performance consolidated for us our previous experience of their great ability to deliver planned outcomes.

During our association since 2015 Caplor Horizons itself has developed significantly. A large number of advisors and partners who work alongside Caplor, enhancing the range and scope of their already impressive skills set and knowledge base, bring a very broad experience and expertise to the coordinated and integrate approach which it promotes.



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The calibre of these advisors makes a game changing impact on the planning and delivery of specific components. So, in our work on Governance training we relied on Caplor's, Dr Peter Moore and Rosie Bishop whose own expertise in this field broadened our horizons on the subject and provided the solid academic base on which the training and capacity building was structured.

During the last seven years our conversations, and planning, with Caplor Horizons, both formally and informally, have been amplified in value by the input of so many experts in so many fields but all integrated into its overarching approach. It is like having the very best minds on any topic available to discuss, dream, plan and execute.

Without doubt the greatest value this long-term collaboration has achieved is the symbiosis that we, as an organisation, have with the Caplor Team and its aims. Rarely, in my experience in working with external facilitators and guides, can we assume that our underlying ethos, values and motivation are fully appreciated. In Caplor's case however, the synergy between our underlying purpose and theirs was evident from the start of our relationship. We have grown together and the mutuality of our fundamental aims means we have absolute confidence in their ability to interact purposely and validly across the diverse scope of our mission and endeavour.



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Thus, it makes a huge difference whenever we embark on some new dimension of our mission work or our capacity development project to have the Caplor Team who knows us, understand more than just what we are trying to do but our drive, our ethos, our purpose behind the activity. That benefit is twofold. Firstly, because of the positive experience of people in our group who have worked with Caplor, others are assured that engaging with Caplor will bring meaningful and relevant outcomes. Secondly, when introduced to a new working group, Caplor exhibits, from the outset, their empathy and understanding of who we are and for what we are striving which raises confidence and comfort in the new group.

The benefit of this level of our relationship is invaluable, it facilitates rapid uptake and clear and effective communication since we understand each other's language and it respects and gives the right place to our vision and ethos.

Finally, it is very significant that Caplor Horizons is a charity. It would not be surprising to have that fact overlooked by those who recognise in Caplor a very efficient, effective, academically rigorous, outcomes motivated, intelligent and highly competent organisation.

But it does make a big difference to be a charity working with another charity – the bottom-line motivation is not for profit but for the improvement of the lives and circumstances of the beneficiaries.

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And Caplor clearly espouses that purpose and demonstrates it through the outcomes it achieves with many other groups who aspire to the same benefits for humanity.

In concrete terms it also translates into extraordinarily good value – and that can only happen when both partners are not counting the time or calculating the cost of every minute activity but directed to the bigger picture outcome of making the difference that is needed.

I have in the past unreservedly recommended Caplor Horizons to others. I will continue to do so because I believe that we as an organisation would not be where we are today without them. Over these eight years Caplor has been our companion, accompanier, mentor, pilot, counsel and always reliable and valued critical friend. The journey has been so much easier and richer for us because of their collaboration.

As they presently are guiding us through a strategic renewal process, I have every confidence that they will help to shape and be part of our tomorrow as well.

By way of additional background, the comments that follow were made in previous years....

The journey began with, Lorna Pearcy and Dr Ian Williams, Co-Directors of Caplor Horizons, facilitated an international gathering of Edmund Rice mission directors in Rome; this was to formulate a Strategic Development Framework (in September 2015) for the Congregation of Christian Brothers.

The process was engaging, enlightening and energetic and all delegates expressed their greatest satisfaction with the outcome achieved in just three intensive days.

The preparation work with the steering committee was professional, intelligent and empathetic and by the commencement of the formal work I had every confidence that the facilitators understood our organisation, its purpose and its hopes for this work.

Their approach was respectful but challenging as Ian and Lorna skillfully led the group to a common articulation of a highly complex reality. Their flexibility in response, and extraordinary capacity for synthesis and focus, ensured the group recognised the emerging statement as an accurate expression of their thinking.

Rarely have I participated in a workshop like this where every delegate owned the outcome with passion and energy. Caplor Horizons has enabled us to take a major step forward in collaboration in our Mission across the globe.

Following the September 2015 process, we engaged Caplor Horizons in early 2016 to work with our most important Mission project: “Our Way into the Future”.



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Jean Sellars and Ian followed a process which was again entirely appropriate to the group and the tasks. This engaged participants such that we achieved in one week what many thought was impossible – to clearly articulate our purpose and plan the total strategy.

The resulting formulation of our Theory of Change and the associated documentation has focused this project and helped ensure our success.

Their approach to developing strategy and structure that had its roots in practical reality resonated with group and enabled us to move forward rapidly; again Caplor Horizons ‘produced the goods’ calmly, efficiently and very effectively.

In June 2016 Caplor Horizons accompanied the twenty leaders of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers from across the globe as they explored their present journey to a new place of being in mission, community and spirituality.

Having adopted a new vision in 2014 and struggled to implement it at local and global level, the leadership group recognised its need to explore the reality and identify the opportunities and obstacles. The process and facilitation carried out by Caplor Horizons enabled the group to find a common language and identify specific strategies for addressing uncertainties.

Participants greatly valued the positive, open and honest atmosphere that was built. All reported that the experience was one where they felt included, valued and were listened to respectfully. The leadership group was grateful for the facilitation process, especially its sensitivity, to enable us to find a deeper place of one mind and heart for the work of the future.

From November 2016, and during 2017, Caplor Horizons worked with the Mission Capacity Support Team for Edmund Rice Mission Development Projects across the Globe.

Various people from Caplor Horizons have been involved in different phases which has engaged with leadership, governance and project coordinators from 20 countries across North America, Africa, India, Australasia, Latin America and Europe.

In Nairobi in May 2017 Caplor Horizons facilitated the formulation of a Global Response strategy built on the outcomes of the research and assessment they helped to conduct.

The process in Nairobi was characteristically Caplor: using the opportunity to build the skills, capacity and confidence of the Edmund Rice Mission Co-ordinators as they worked to develop and refine the strategy. The result was a concise single page overview and a clear articulation of Mission and purpose. In my experience, only Caplor Horizons is able so successfully to distil very complex outcomes, diverse thinking and culturally broad needs and intentions into their hallmark ‘SOAP’ – Strategy on a Page.

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That strategy – the basis of a three-year response for building the capacity and skills within our Edmund Rice Development Projects – was subsequently endorsed by leadership across the world and commissioned by the Congregation Leadership Team to take our work into the future.

During 2018 Caplor Horizons facilitated very important gatherings in Nairobi and South Africa during which time our collaboration focused on delivering the capacity development strategy.

Throughout 2019 Caplor Horizons has continued to accompany our Edmund Rice Mission Capacity Support Project over a period when it was fully active across more than 13 countries.

In March 2019, our Mission Coordinators met in Shillong, India where, with a program designed collaboratively with Caplor Horizons, we blended the sharing of best practice with significant training in results based management, finances and child safeguarding. Most significantly each Mission Coordinator came out of Shillong with a new road map for the immediate future and the skills to carry it forward.

This is one of the greatest strengths of Caplor Horizons: to blend learning, training and action so skilfully that there is no artificial division between the three experiences; participants consequently grow in knowledge and skills and are empowered to act.

Lorna and Ian, combined as a facilitating pair, both bring extraordinary skills to this role. Together they have a great gift of being able to constantly read and respond to where the group is at in any moment of the process.

That gift was no more evident than in a MCST week in Lima, Peru in October 2019.

We had a complex program in Lima which, along with our usual agenda for evaluating and sharing progress of the project against its strategic framework, addressed learning, training and empowerment to act on two critical issues of...

- 1) Effective Relationships between Governance & Management of Development Projects
- 2) Strategically bringing about Change of Culture and Structure at our group level and Congregation wide.

Our group meets twice annually. Significant resources are used to bring them together from all over the world. We are very conscious that we need to get great value from our time together.

We always commence by spending time experiencing local development projects and Caplor Horizons is adept at mining that experience throughout the subsequent days, keeping us grounded in the reality that our work is ultimately for the beneficiaries of our projects all over the world.

As usual, months of meticulous planning with Caplor Horizons went into preparation for the week and our executive felt very confident that we would



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build greatly on the Shillong experience and forge even stronger bonds of teamwork in our network of Mission Coordinators.

Working with Caplor Horizons in the planning phase is always exciting and stimulating. They are highly creative and, because of their vast network of expertise, bring into the planning conversations the voices of relevant highly experienced professionals in this case Professor Sharon Turnbull, with regard to change and organisational culture and Dr Peter Moore on aspects of Governance. Their contribution was invaluable in shaping both the content and the processes of the week's program.

As was the conversation we had with Simon Oldroyd, another member of the Caplor Horizons team, whose experience and thinking guided us through the complexities of establishing a strong working relationship with a new leadership team in one of our national offices.

With Caplor Horizons, you get so much more because of their huge network of professionals who give generously of their time and expertise to enhance the quality of the support for us.

With such resources behind us from the Caplor crew we were well prepared for our second meeting in 2019 in Lima.

Despite a tightly planned and resourced program, detailed preparation of specific materials, as always, Caplor Horizons remained flexible ready to adapt and tailor the sessions as the energy, wisdom and needs of the group emerged. At every break, after each session, our steering group met and reviewed, adapted and replanned. This is typical of the dynamic, fluid approach that Caplor Horizons uses in facilitation and it means that what we then do with the group is always relevant and building on what is being achieved in real-time.

These are very intense processes where Ian's enormous capacity to hear, analyse and formulate a direction and Lorna's intuitive sense of the emotional state and energy within the group and its needs come together with breathtaking clarity just in time [and every time] to launch into the next session.

It would be impossible to describe in detail just how well this worked in Lima except to say that as a group we achieved outcomes well beyond what we had planned, and even beyond what we had imagined possible. Ian and Lorna would both modestly say that it was the group and their commitment to the process that got us there. However, in reality it was the skilled leadership of our facilitators, Caplor Horizons that made it possible yet again.

We have a very strong relationship with Caplor Horizons after so many years of collaborating and the interaction transcends the highly professional service they provide. We feel a mutual commitment to our purpose and process and we work as partners; I know they believe in what we believe in and want as much for our work to succeed as we do ourselves. As a result of this, their dedication to the work is unparalleled.

The relationship extends well beyond the role of facilitators for our project.



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Caplor Horizons provides holistic support...

Our CEO, Fiona Dowling, undertakes regular mentoring and professional supervision with Dan Bishop which she finds extremely supportive of her role and work

Furthermore, Caplor Horizons publishes a 'updates' newsletter, which like their SOAP strategy is crisp, focused and on a single page for ease of reading and comprehension.

All our coordinators and many more in their offices and projects gain huge benefits from the insights, learnings and thoughts offered in the Caplor Updates.

Having this regularly arrive in our inbox means that the learning and training is continuously and powerfully reinforced and extended.

Finally, Caplor Horizons also conduct 'community events' and have its 'Strategic Change and Development Group; these bring together the extended Caplor Community and explore contemporary thinking around a huge range of developmental topics.

The calibre of the Caplor Horizons advisory team is outstanding: it contributes to the capacity to bring to their role of accompaniment and facilitation the best contemporary thinking in leadership and development.

I can only reiterate, from now much longer and broader experience with Caplor, how confident in their skill and processes I am and how much I value their partnership with us in this endeavour.

From my experience over decades of working with facilitators, I know that Caplor Horizons uniquely brings to the table of planning, enabling and empowering big change, their wisdom, skills, dedication and commitment without which we would not have achieved the progress our project has made in these last few years.

I enthusiastically endorse Caplor Horizon's work and endeavour, recommend them most highly and would willingly speak to this affirmation to anyone contemplating the use of their services."



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CEO