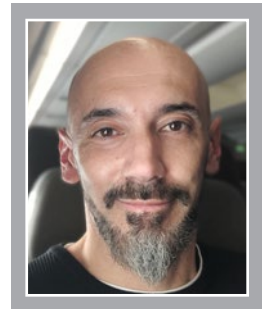

Unleashing the Power of Servant Leadership: Transforming Lives and Building a Just World for Children

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It is a great honor for me to hold the position of director of the Marist Foundation for International Solidarity (FMSI) since 2021. My journey to FMSI follows a rewarding 12-year career in project management and international projects. I am passionate creating meaningful and lasting change, inspired by the dedication of our team and the resilience of the communities we serve.

FMSI, the Marist Foundation for International Solidarity, is dedicated to advancing the well-being and rights of children globally. And I believe that FMSI cannot exist unless it has no other interests but those of serving its **mission**.

However, this endeavour is fraught with significant challenges.

The field of international cooperation is undergoing transformation, necessitating a heightened level of adaptability and accountability. It calls for leaders who possess the essential skills to drive change, engage in transparent decision-making processes, and adjust to the ever-changing dynamics of the monumental challenges we face. Such leaders must embody the values of a foundation that envisions a world devoid of child exploitation, poverty, discrimination, and violence. They must grasp the significance of empathy, justice, and equal opportunities for all, especially for vulnerable children in need of **protection**. Their ability to inspire a collective vision of a society where the rights of every child are safeguarded, respected, and fulfilled is crucial. This vision should serve as a guiding force, motivating the organization's actions and rallying stakeholders to contribute their efforts towards its realization.



Is that even humanly possible?

When reflecting on the significant role of servant leadership in our endeavours, I envision it as a reliable **compass** within our toolkit. It serves as a guiding presence that aids us in navigating the intricacies and challenges of our ever-evolving world. A leader applying a servant leadership model understands that the mission is not just a statement but a guiding light. When faced with choices or dilemmas, referring to the mission and the need to serve it provides a framework for making informed decisions that serve the **greater purpose**. It works as a source of inspiration during challenging times, reminding leaders and their collaborators of the significance of their work and the positive impact they can create.

By embodying the value of service, the leader leverages the mission to inspire, unite, and empower individuals in pursuit of shared objectives. And **empowerment** plays a special role in servant leadership applied to what I do. In the context of solidarity projects, servant leadership support us in naturally fostering an environment that values empathy, compassion, respect, and inclusivity. We are not merely executors of our operational plans; we are servant leaders able to foster a culture of solidarity within the organization and in the communities where the mission takes place. We are inspired by individuals and communities who dedicated their life to others: we use this driving force, and we give it back to others to come together and support life changing initiatives fostering a sense of interconnectedness and shared responsibility. We promote volunteerism, mentorship, and community engagement, creating a ripple effect that strengthens solidarity and collective action.

We in FMSI are committed to challenging and transforming the systems and structures that perpetuate inequality and violation of children's rights. We advocate for policy changes, mobilize resources, and collaborate with stakeholders to create a more just and equitable society for children. And it is crucial to understand that children themselves are key stakeholders and **agents**

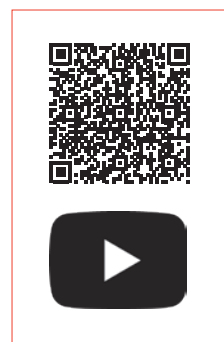
of change in child rights initiatives. It is part of our mission, to actively engage and empower children, providing platforms for their voices to be heard, and involving them in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Empowerment in this context has an even more meaningful scope: creating opportunities for children to participate, contribute, and lead initiatives that champion their own rights, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and agency among the younger generation.

And even when doing our communication, we want to improve and embrace servant leadership. “FMSI wants to be able to create a bias-free environment that encourages empowerment and respects cultural diversity, free from a paternalistic perspective that positions FMSI and its possible allies as agents of change instead of the local community. It is essential to shift the axis of attention: no longer a culture of ego, but a culture of echo”.

As said before, the mission acts as a rallying point, igniting enthusiasm and commitment, even when faced with obstacles or setbacks. This is also supporting us in the capacity of looking beyond, fostering and supporting the shift in focus from operational outputs to more strategic outcomes. We can now be **visionaries** who inspire and communicate a compelling vision of the organization’s purpose and long-term goals. By painting a clear picture of the desired strategic outcomes, we are committed to motivate team members to see beyond day-to-day tasks and understand the broader impact their work can have. And this is another powerful feature of the servant leaders: we lead by demonstrating a commitment to the organization’s mission, serving as a role model for others to follow. By prioritizing strategic outcomes in our own decision-making and actions, we shall inspire and motivate team members to do the same, to see beyond day-to-day tasks and understand the broader **impact** their work can have, fostering a learning mindset and reinforcing the importance of commitment and accountability.

In FMSI, servant leadership is the key to serving the mission, overcoming challenges, driving change, and creating a better world for children. It is the guiding force that empowers us to navigate complexity, amplify voices, and foster solidarity. As we embrace the principles of servant leadership, we not only transform ourselves but also inspire others to join us in our noble quest for a more just, inclusive, and compassionate society.

Together, we can make the seemingly impossible humanly possible.



The opinions expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Marist Institute.

If you would like to share your ideas, reflections, or experiences about servant and prophetic leadership with the Commission as a result of these reflections, write to fms.cimm@fms.it

