

LESA 101

The Story of LESA

A Journey of Love, Unity, and Service

Good evening, dear LESANs.

Before we begin, let's take a moment to congratulate ourselves. Just a few moments ago, we put our LESA knowledge to the test. Some questions may have been easy. Some may have made us think. And a few may have reminded us that our history is richer than we sometimes realize.

Behind every answer lies a piece of our shared heritage, a reminder of the people, values, traditions, and experiences that have shaped LESA for more than five decades.

As I look in the chat, I see lesans from different generations, different professions, different cities, and even different countries.

Yet there is something that connects us immediately.

The mention of **Lourdes**.

For many of us, one word is enough.

Lourdes.

Immediately, memories begin to surface.

The campus.

The classrooms.

The chapel.

The dormitories.

The Master.

The dining room.

The friendships.

The laughter.

The lessons.

The Reverend Sisters who challenged us, encouraged us, corrected us, and believed in us.

At the time, we were not thinking about history.

We were simply living our lives.

We had no idea that years later, women who once sat in those same classrooms would be gathered together across cities, countries, and continents, still connected by the same school, the same values, and the same spirit.

Yet here we are.

More than fifty years later.

Still connected.

Still united.

Still proudly carrying the Lourdes spirit wherever life has taken us.

That did not happen by accident.

It happened because a group of visionary women, together with dedicated Reverend Sisters, believed that the Lourdes experience should not end at graduation.

They believed that the friendships, values, and sense of belonging that Lourdes had cultivated were worth preserving.

They believed that future generations of Lourdes women would benefit from remaining connected to one another and to their alma mater.

And so, they began to build something extraordinary.

That dream became LESA.

It is a community.

It is a network of support.

It is a source of friendship.

It is a bridge between generations.

It is a living reminder that while we may leave Lourdes, Lourdes never truly leaves us.

This evening, we celebrate that journey.

We celebrate the Reverend Sisters whose vision helped shape generations of young women.

We celebrate the pioneers who transformed an idea into an institution.

We celebrate the leaders who strengthened and sustained the Association through the years.

And we celebrate every LESAN who has carried the Lourdes spirit into her family, profession, church, and community.

The story we are about to revisit is filled with faith, determination, service, and perseverance.

It is a story of women who saw beyond themselves.

A story of friendships that stood the test of time.

A story of an association that grew from a small gathering of former students into a global sisterhood.

Most importantly, it is our story.

So let us journey back to where it all began.

Let us rediscover the people, the milestones, and the values that shaped LESA.

And let us celebrate the remarkable legacy of the Lourdes Ex-Students' Association.

A Vision Beyond Graduation

In the years following graduation, former students discovered that their connection to Lourdes remained strong. The friendships endured. The values endured. The sense of belonging endured.

The Reverend Sisters, school administration, and alumni recognized the need for an organization that would preserve these relationships while fostering continued spiritual growth, mutual support, and lifelong engagement.

What they envisioned was not simply an alumni association.

They envisioned a lifelong sisterhood.

The Courage to Begin

Every lasting legacy begins with a few people willing to take the first step.

For LESA, those pioneers included Rev. Sr. Mary Hewson, Rev. Sr. Denise, Mrs. Morfaw Maria Atanga and Mrs. Fortung Hortensia Ngang. Together, they worked tirelessly to transform an idea into reality.

The Reverend Sisters provided guidance and encouragement. Former students reached out to classmates and friends. Enthusiasm spread from one graduate to another.

Then, in March 1971, the first LESA meeting was held on the Lourdes campus. What appeared to be a simple gathering would become the foundation of a movement that would thrive for generations.

A dream became an organization.

An organization became a community.

A community became a legacy.

Building a Family

The growth of LESA was never measured solely by the number of members it attracted. Its true strength was found in the relationships it nurtured.

Annual General Meetings became moments of reunion, reflection, and renewal. Initially held on the Lourdes campus around the Feast Day of Our Lady of Lourdes, these gatherings strengthened the bonds that united members and reinforced the values they shared.

As the Association expanded, AGMs began rotating among branches and chapters, allowing members across different regions to play a central role in LESA's development.

The inaugural LESA Ball, held at the Mankon Community Hall, became another milestone. It brought together alumni, Reverend Sisters, and distinguished guests in a joyful celebration of friendship, achievement, and shared heritage.

These events created memories and a sense of belonging.

Leadership in Service

Every strong institution rests upon the dedication of those who choose to serve.

LESA Bamenda became the first branch of the Association and proudly earned the title of Mother Branch. Under the leadership of Rev. Sr. Mary Hewson, the first President, and Mrs.

Sikod Rose Ngente, the first Chairperson, a culture of service, accountability, and commitment began to take shape.

Successive leaders inherited not merely positions of authority, but a responsibility to preserve the values of Lourdes while preparing LESA for future generations.

Today, that journey continues under the leadership of our Chapter President, Dr. Claire Menang, your Branch Presidents and Barrister Patience Higson Ngwa, who serves as President General and continues the tradition of strengthening unity and purpose throughout the Association.

The Constitution and the Motto

As LESA grew, members recognized the importance of creating a framework capable of guiding future generations.

Contributors including Rev. Sr. Mary Neville, Mrs. Njende Mary, and Mrs. Forju Anne helped develop the LESA Constitution, creating a document that would preserve the Association's vision while providing structure for its continued growth.

The Constitution gave LESA direction.

The motto gave LESA identity.

Unity. Love. Service.

These three words capture the very essence of the Association.

Unity reminds LESANs that they belong to something greater than themselves.

Love reflects the spirit of friendship, care, and mutual support that binds members together.

Service reminds every member of the responsibility to contribute to fellow alumni, to Lourdes, and to society.

For more than five decades, these principles have guided the Association's journey.

Constitution Amendment

As LESA continued to grow and evolve, members recognized the need to review and strengthen the Association's governing framework.

The review and amendment process spanned many years and culminated in the adoption of the revised Constitution at the Annual General Meeting held in Buea in March 2024.

This milestone demonstrated LESA's commitment to growth, sound governance, and its determination to remain faithful to its founding vision while preparing for the future.

Symbols of Belonging

Every family develops traditions that connect generations.

For LESA, the blue or Marian blue as we like to call it and white uniform with Our Lady appearing to Bernadette became a visible expression of identity, belonging, and pride. Wherever LESANs gather, these colors serve as a reminder of the values, friendships, and shared experiences that unite them.

The LESA Anthem became another powerful symbol of unity. Composed by Professor Akenji Theresia Nkuo in 2003 and first performed during the Lourdes Ruby Jubilee celebrations, the anthem gave voice to the spirit that members carried within their hearts.

Together, these symbols link past generations to present ones and help preserve the legacy for those yet to come. They like symbols of any entity belong to the people and no one branch or chapter can re-create them on their own.

Beyond Borders

What began on the Lourdes campus soon reached far beyond Bamenda.

New branches emerged across Cameroon, including Buea, Yaoundé, Douala, Ndop, Tiko, Limbe, Kumbo, Kumba, and Bafoussam. As alumni settled in different regions, they carried the LESA spirit with them and established communities that reflected the same values and traditions.

In time, LESA crossed national boundaries. Chapters in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and other locations extended the reach of the Association far beyond its beginnings.

Today, LESA is a global sisterhood.

Preserving the Legacy

Strong institutions survive because each generation accepts responsibility for preserving the work of those who came before.

The pioneers created LESA.

Leaders strengthened it.

Members sustained it.

Now YOU are helping preserve its story.

The Education 101 Team has undertaken the important task of documenting, teaching, and celebrating the history of LESA so that future generations understand the journey that brought them here.

The team includes:

- Ma Gladys Boma Njiti, Chairperson
- Mafor Lucie Ngongbo, Co-Chair
- Shey Sabina Jules, Rapporteur
- Prof Mafor Edwan, Member
- Dr. Yang Kume Geh, Member
- Ms. Iya Bijengsi, Member

Their work reflects the same spirit that inspired the founders in 1971: ensuring that LESA's values, stories, lessons, and traditions continue to inspire generations yet to come. This story is open to refinement at any time. Send comments and suggestions to the LESA Education Committee.

My final thought - More than fifty years ago, a handful of dedicated women and Reverend Sisters planted a seed.

Today, that seed has grown into a thriving community spanning generations and continents.

The founders wrote the first chapter.

Every generation since has added its own pages, including LESA USA.

And now, the responsibility belongs to us.

Now you are helping preserve its story.

Through your friendships.

Through your service.

Through your support for one another.

Through your commitment to Lourdes and to future generations of LESANs.

The story of LESA continues because each generation chooses to carry it forward.

And one day, those who come after us will look back on our generation and add our chapter to this remarkable story.

May they find that we strengthened what we inherited.

May they find that we remained faithful to our values.

May they find that we left LESA stronger than we found it.

Unity. Love. Service.

Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow.

Long Live LESA.

Presented to you by Mrs. Gladys Boma Njiti

Chairperson

LESA Education Committee

October 12, 2026