YOUFRA SAMPLE DRAFT OF NATIONAL STATUTES

*This sample draft must be adapted to the situations and conditions of youth in different countries. It is not enough to simply use this document verbatum.*

**NATIONAL STATUTES OF THE YOUFRA OF ...**

**CHAPTER 1: NATURE**

1. The Franciscan Youth (Youfra) is the fellowship of young people who feel called by the Holy Spirit to have an experience of Christian life, in fraternity, and in the light of the message of Francis of Assisi, deepening their vocation within the realm of the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO).

2. Youfra belongs to the Franciscan family as an integral part of the SFO and considers the Rule of the SFO as the inspirational document for the growth of its own Christian and Franciscan vocation, both individually and as a group.

3. Inasmuch as Youfra belongs to the Franciscan family, its pastoral care and spiritual assistance is entrusted to the First Order and to the Third Order Regular (TOR).

4. In view of Youfra's vital and reciprocal communion with the SFO, and the responsibility that the SFO feel for it, the fraternal animation of the Youfra is entrusted to the SFO.

5. Youfra operates in groups called fraternities at various levels: local, regional and national. Normally, each of the fraternities is related to an SFO fraternity.

6. Youfra is open to young Catholics, male and female, 14 to 30 years of age, who are searching for their own identity and project of life.

7. In the Philippines, Youfra is governed by the universal law of the Church, by the General Constitutions of the SFO and by these Statutes, approved by the national council of the SFO in the Philippines.

8. It belongs to the National Council of the Youfra to clarify specific matters and to find solutions to particular situations not addressed by these statutes. Such decisions are valid until the next national assembly of the Youfra.

**CHAPTER II: LIFE AND ACTION**

9. The form of life of the Youfra is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, following the example of St. Francis of Assisi who made Christ the inspiration and center of his life with God and people.

10. Young Franciscans, therefore, are to seek the living and acting person of Christ in the brothers and sisters, in Holy Scriptures, in the Church and in liturgical celebrations.

11. Buried and risen with Christ in Baptism - which makes them living members of the Church, let members of Youfra become witnesses and instruments of his mission among people, announcing Christ in words and in deeds. Inspired by St. Francis and called, like him, to rebuild the Church, let them commit themselves to a life of full communion with the pope, the bishops, and priests, in an open and sincere dialogue of apostolic creativity.

12. Impelled by the dynamism of the gospel, let them conform their way of thinking and acting to that of Christ, through a radical inner change which the gospel itself calls "conversion" and which, due to human frailty, has to be renewed daily. In this process of renewal, the sacrament of Reconciliation is a privileged sign of God's mercy and a source of grace.

13. As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, so also members of Youfra must strive to make the life of prayer and contemplation the soul of their being and acting. They are to participate in the sacramental life of the Church, particularly in the Eucharist, and to join in the liturgical prayer of the people of God, re-living the mysteries of Christ's life.

14. Young Franciscans are to give witness to their ardent love for Mary, the humble servant of the Lord, by imitating her attentiveness to the word of God and her unconditional openness to the call of the Lord.

15. Associated to Christ, poor and obedient, members of Youfra are to fulfill the duties of their state in life and to seek a balanced relationship with earthly things, simplifying their material needs. Let them take a firm stand against ideologies and attitudes that place material well-being over and above human and religious values, and allow the exploitation of people.

16. In the spirit of the beatitudes, let them strive to purify their hearts of all longing and desire for possessions and power, as pilgrims and strangers on their journey towards the Father's house. Committed to attain this purity of heart, they will become free to experience the love of God and of people.

17. Let them search for the very roots of universal fraternity and foster everywhere the spirit of acceptance and an atmosphere of community, which will make them happy and ready to identify with all men and women, particularly with the poorest ones. Let them collaborate with movements that promote fraternity among the nations, and let them take a clear stand whenever the dignity of men and women is trampled upon through any form of oppression or indifference.

18. Called together with all men and women of good will to build a world that is more fraternal and more evangelical in order to realize the kingdom of God, let them commit themselves to the performance of the duties proper to their state and to adequately prepare for the world of work. Let them assume, in the spirit of service, their social and civil responsibilities.

19. Let them live in their own family the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity and respect for life, and let them strive to make it the sign of a world already renewed in Christ. Let them cooperate with the efforts being undertaken in the Church and in society to affirm the value of fidelity and respect for life, from the moment of conception and in all circumstances, until death. Those preparing for marriage should be aware that the beauty and strength of love, sanctified by the sacrament, constitutes a profound witness for the family, the Church and the world.

20. As bearers of peace and being aware that peace is to be built up without ceasing, let them search for paths of unity and fraternal understanding through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone, and in the transforming power of love and forgiveness. Let them cooperate with movements and institutions that promote peace, respecting its authentic foundations and renouncing  the use of violence. Let them value the option of those who, being consciencious objectors, refuse to carry arms.

21. Let them show respect for all creatures, animate or inanimate, which "carry the imprint of the most High," and let them try by all means to overcome the temptation of exploitation through the Franciscan concept of universal kinship. Let them collaborate with the efforts being undertaken to avoid pollution and to preserve the treasures of nature.

22. As messengers of "perfect joy", let them exert constant efforts to bring to others joy and hope. Hence, they are called to create an environment and conditions of life that do not threaten humankind, but rather help people discover the will of God. Let them do their part to minimize anguish and pessimism, so as to face a brighter future. Let them commit themselves to fostering in their surroundings a climate of faith and hope, so that "sister death" may be accepted as a passage to the Father.

**CHAPTER III :  FORMATION**

23. Membership in the Youfra takes place through an itinerary of progressive formation, according to the programs, methods and contents formulated by the national assembly of the Youfra. The vocational journey normally takes shape in the following stages: a period of initiation, a period of initial formation, and a period of commitment to the Youfra.

24. The time of initiation into the Youfra is a time for searching, for establishing initial contacts, for rapprochement and acceptance, which culminates with the decision to initiate the time of formation. The duration of these periods can be between 3 to 6 months, according to the judgement of the local council. The candidates coming from the Lifra or Pre-Youfra are exempted from this period of initiation.

25. The petition for admission to this period of formation is submitted in writing by the candidate to the President of the fraternity of the local Youfra. The conditions for the admission are: to profess the Catholic faith, to live in communion with the Church, and to have good moral character. The council of the fraternity acts collegially on the petition, provides a formal answer to the candidate, and informs the fraternity.

26. The period of formation is the time to come to know and live the gospel according to the example of St. Francis, within the fraternity of the Youfra. This period of time should last not less than a year; its duration is to be determined by the council of the fraternity and by the candidate, but it should not go beyond 2 years. At the beginning of this stage of formation, a distinctive sign or symbol of the Youfra is given to the candidate. (Description of the sign).

27. The petition to make the promise in the Youfra is to be submitted in writing by the candidate to the President of the local fraternity of the Youfra. This petition can only be presented by the candidate when the period of formation required has been completed. The council of the fraternity decides, through secret ballot, on the petition, gives a formal answer to the candidate, and informs the fraternity.

28. The promise in the Youfra is a formal act by which the young person is fully incorporated into the fraternity. If possible, the promise in the Youfra should be done within the eucharistic celebration.

29. The promise marks the beginning of a period of time intended for deepening one's vocation, for discovering and for translating into daily life the inspirations of the SFO Rule, in order to verify one's vocation and to respond to God's call.

30. Since Youfra is a vocational journey and a time for verification, which by its very nature is temporary, membership in it ends when a vocation is verified, or when the person reaches the age of 30. National and international officers of the Youfra who had been elected before reaching that age can now end their term of service.

31. Members of the Youfra who wish to profess in the SFO must observe the provisions of the Rule, of the General Constitutions, and of the Ritual of the SFO. Profession in the SFO completes and perfects the promise made in the Youfra and does not exclude the young person from the Youfra fraternity. In relation to the Youfra, profession in the SFO has the same effects as the promise made in the Youfra.

**CHAPTER IV: ORGANIZATION**

**The Local Fraternity**

32. The local fraternity is the primary cell of the Youfra, the place where the brothers and sisters meet and have their experience of Christian life, in the light of the message of St. Francis of Assisi. The members of the fraternity meet regularly (for example, weekly) to live together their relationship with God and with one another. It is necessary that the meetings combine moments of prayer and formation with moments of action and recreation. The meetings are to be organized in such a way that they contribute to the insertion of the Youfra Fraternity into the Franciscan Family and into the local church.

33. The recognition of a local Youfra Fraternity is done by the Youfra council of the higher level, in collaboration with the local council of the SFO—the two councils with which the new Youfra Fraternity will be connected. (Cf. Constitutions 46,1). Let the proper religious superior be informed, from whom spiritual assistance must be sought. For a fraternity to be recognized, it must have at least five members who have made the promise in the Youfra. The record of the recognition is to be kept in the archives of the fraternity; a copy is to be furnished to the pertinent SFO council.

34. Each local fraternity of the Youfra maintains a vital and reciprocal communion with a local SFO community from which it seeks fraternal animation and with which it interchanges representatives in their respective councils. (The fraternal animator and the SFO representative can be one and the same person).

35. The local fraternity is animated and guided by a council composed of a  president, a  vice president and at least one councilor--all elected for a period of no more than three years. According to the needs of each fraternity, more officers may be added; they enjoy the right to vote only if they were elected by the Assembly. The representative of the SFO council and the spiritual assistant are also members of the council. The president or, in his absence, a delegate designated by the council, represents the local Youfra fraternity in the council of the local SFO fraternity.

36. The elective assembly of the local Youfra fraternity meets once over a period of no more than three years and is presided by the president of the higher level or his delegate. All the brothers and sisters who have made the promise in the Youfra or the profession in the SFO enjoy active and passive voice.

**The Regional Fraternity**

37. The regional fraternity is the union of all the local Youfra fraternities in a given territory which coincides with a regional SFO fraternity. Its formation belongs to the National Council of the Youfra, together with the Regional Council of the SFO and the proper religious superiors from whom spiritual assistance is to be sought.

38. The regional fraternity is animated and guided by a council composed of a President, a Vice President and at least one councilor--all elected by the regional assembly for a period of 3 years. If necessary, the Regional Assembly may add other officers who will enjoy the right to vote only if they were elected by the Assembly. The representative of the SFO regional council and the regional spiritual assistants are also members of the council. The regional president, or, in his absence, a delegate designated by the council, represents the regional Youfra fraternity in the council of the regional SFO fraternity.

39. The regional Assembly meets at least once a year; it is presided over by its president. The elective regional assembly meets once every three years; it is presided over by the national president of the Youfra or his delegate. In the regional Assembly, the following have an active voice: the regional council and, from each local community, the president and a representative elected by the local assembly. All the young Franciscans of the regional fraternity who have made their promise in the Youfra or their profession in the SFO may be elected to any office.  The SFO representative and the spiritual assistant enjoy neither active nor passive voice in the elections to the different offices.

**The National Fraternity**

40. The national fraternity is the union of all the fraternities of the Youfra which exist in the territory of a national fraternity of the SFO. It is animated and guided by a council composed of a president, a vice president, and at least 3 councilors, all elected by the elective national assembly for a period of 3 years.  If necessary, the national assembly may add other officers who enjoy the right to vote, but only if they are elected by the assembly. The following are members of the council: the representative of the national council of the SFO and the national spiritual assistants. The President or, in his absence, a delegate chosen by the council, represents the national Youfra fraternity in the council of the national SFO fraternity.

41. The national assembly meets at least once a year; it is presided over by its president. The elective national assembly meets once every 3 years and is presided over by the national minister of the SFO or his/her delegate. The following have active voice in the elective national assembly: the national council and the members of the regional councils. According to the constitution of the SFO (Art.97,3), at least 2 members of national council of the Youfra must be professed in the SFO. The other members may be chosen from among all the young Franciscans who have made their promise in the Youfra or their profession in the SFO. In the election of the different officers, the representative of the SFO and the national spiritual assistants have neither active nor passive voice.

**The Assembly of the Youfra**

42. The assemblies, at any level, are convoked by a decision of their respective councils; their aim is to promote fraternal life, mutual acquaintance, as well as human, Christian and Franciscan growth.

The convocation of the elective Assemblies must be done at least one month ahead of time (indicating the place, date and hour of the election).

**The Elections**

43. Before starting the election of each office, the President of the elective Assembly shall invite the voters who have an active voice to nominate candidates for the various offices. The nomination of candidates is merely orientative in nature.  An election conducted with a closed list of candidates is invalid.

44. For the election of the president and the vice president at all levels, an absolute majority is required (that is, more than half of the votes of those having active voice), cast by secret ballot. After two unsuccessful ballots, a third ballot is conducted in which only the two nominees who obtained the highest number of votes are candidates, or, if there were more than two,  the first two to make their promise in the Youfra. If in the third ballot there is still a tie, the one who made the promise first is considered elected.

45. For all other elections, after a first ballot without an absolute majority, a second ballot is  conducted in which a relative majority of the votes of those present, cast in secret, suffices.

46. The presidents and councilors at all levels can be elected only for two consecutive terms. The office of president of two different levels as well as the offices of president, vice president, secretary and treasurer in the same level are incompatible.

47. The president at any level coordinates the activities of his/her fraternity, convokes and directs the meetings of the council, and represents his fraternity in the functions of other fraternities and organizations.

48. The vice president cooperates with the President in the performance of his/her duties, carries out whatever tasks are entrusted to him/her by the council or the assembly, substitutes for the president during the latter's absence or temporary impediment, and assumes the duties of president when the office is vacant.

49. The secretary writes the minutes of the meetings, looks after the archives of the fraternity and takes care of the correspondence. Together with the President, s/he signs the official minutes of the fraternity.

50. The Treasurer administers and keeps the inventory of temporal and financial matters, and renders an account of his administration to the council. Together with the President, s/he signs the financial reports of the fraternity.

51. The one responsible for formation, together with the council, coordinates the formation activities of the fraternity and promotes the formation of the brothers and sisters in the various stages of formation.

52. The councilors are elected by the assembly to perform the tasks assigned to them. Together with the president and the vice president, they are responsible for the animation and guidance of the fraternity.

**The Fraternal Animator**

53. The fraternal animator is to seek the best possible means of fostering the vitality of the Youfra fraternity; s/he is to be ready to communicate his/her experience of gospel living to the young brothers and sisters, and helps them advance in the path of human and spiritual growth.

**The Spiritual Assistant**

54. The spiritual assistant bears witness to the Franciscan spirituality and to the fraternal affection of the friars towards the brothers and sisters of the Youfra; s/he promotes the fidelity of the members of Youfra to the Franciscan charism, communion with the Church and union with the Franciscan family; s/he cooperates particularly in the formation of the brothers and sisters.

**CHAPTER V:  ADDITIONS AND MODIFICATIONS**

55. Since it is impossible to foresee all future eventualities, all unforeseen problems and queries are to be solved by applying, with the proper adaptations, the provisions of the General Constitutions of the SFO, the Statutes of the International Fraternity of the SFO and the National Statutes of the SFO.

56. The pastoral and spiritual assistance of the fraternities at all levels is governed, with the proper adaptations, by the Statutes for the Pastoral and Spiritual Assistance of the SFO.

57. Modifications of these National Statutes of the Youfra are to be done in the Youfra national assembly, with the approval of 2/3 of those present with right to vote. To become legally binding, such modifications must  be approved by the national Council of the SFO or, in its absence,  by the Presidency of the CIOFS

Approved by the National Council on . . . . . . . . ., 200 . . .