



STATEMENT AFTER THE FOURTH WORKSHOP OF THE NETWORK OF SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES (SCCs) IN AFRICA HELD IN KINSHASA-DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (6th to 11th September, 2017)

PREAMBLE

We, the participants of The Fourth Workshop of the Network of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa, following the previous workshops in Accra, 2014, Ouagadougou, 2015 and Nairobi, 2016, assembled at “Centre Theresianum” in Congo-Kinshasa from 6th to 11th September, 2017. We are a resource forum of experts and practitioners who are passionate about the growth and sustainability of Small Christian Communities in Africa. We recognize that these Communities are a space for sowing and nurturing our faith as Catholic faithful.

The workshop was jointly organized by *Missio - Pontifical Mission Society Aachen (missio Aachen)* with support from the offices of the *Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM)* and the *Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA)*. Amongst the twenty-six participants from seven different countries (Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) there were also representatives of SECAM, AMECEA and missio Aachen.

After a keynote address by Prof. Dr. mult Klaus Vellguth, Miriam Leidingner - the convener, gave the rationale and objectives of the workshop followed by presentations from participants of respective countries.

The aims of this workshop were:

1. To assess initiatives undertaken since the Nairobi workshop.
2. To create a platform for sharing experiences and resources among Small Christian Communities in Africa and in the diaspora.
3. To review and critically analyze the impact of online networking involving the internet site www.africansccsnetworking.org.
4. To consolidate the relations between the SCCs on the African continent and consequently bring together individuals committed to the life of, and reflection on, SCCs from several African countries and the diaspora.

5. To discuss the viability of including SCCs in the network at diocesan and national level from the respective countries.

OBSERVATIONS

After the sharing of experiences, participants observed that a lot has been achieved since the last meeting. However, there are gaps that need to be filled. These gaps exist in areas of Structure, Capacity and the Strengthening of the Network through the website.

Some of the progress that we have noted is as follows:

- The SCCs are becoming an important anchor point in many countries as a response to the challenges of evangelization.
- With the introduction of SCCs, the faithful are empowered to be self-reliant and accountable through their work.
- Some regions and countries have developed resource materials for training facilitators of SCCs, for example the *Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA)* and the *National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENCO)*.
- The website www.africansccsnetworking.org has been introduced successfully.
- Some participants have been able to collect useful data on SCCs at national or at diocesan level, which can be used for further research.
- Some members of the Network already work with *Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs)* and all members recognize the importance of that work and the necessity to promote it.

We would like to encourage further reflection on the following issues addressing the Pastoral Offices in our Conferences:

- We see the necessity to invest in trainings and formation of the leaders of SCCs.
- We note the absence of the youth and men in SCCs. This defeats the fundamental idea of the Church as family.
- We note the lack of statistical data in many countries and dioceses.
- We are concerned that not all Conferences have embraced the idea of SCCs as a pastoral priority. Therefore, we request that this spirit be encouraged.
- We propose that SCCs be formally introduced as a course in Seminaries, Houses of Formation, Pastoral Institutes and Institutions of Higher Learning.

COMMITMENTS

On the basis of the progress made and gaps outlined above, participants made the following commitments:

1. Structure

- We commit ourselves to transmit the material of the Network from research works and deductive reflections and distribute it through the National Conferences for further dissemination.

2. Capacity

- We commit ourselves to promote the training of SCCs animators.
- We commit ourselves to work collaboratively with the Biblical Apostolate regarding the sharing of the Word of God.

3. Strengthen the Network

- We cherish the resources of the Network and commit ourselves to support each other in the distribution of our work and resource materials through the website www.africansccsnetworking.org.
- We commit ourselves to send articles on SCCs to the designated coordinators of the Website (English: Dr. Alphonse Omolo, email: alphonceomolo@gmail.com; French: Sr. Dr. Josée Ngalula, email: ngalulajosee@yahoo.fr). We further commit ourselves to keep the website updated.
- All articles on SCCs sent to the coordinators for the website shall be copied to Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Chimombo (AMECEA Pastoral Coordinator-email: pastoral@amecea.org); and Miriam Leidinger (missio Aachen, Theological Researcher-email: miriam.leidinger@missio-hilft.de). All articles in Portuguese shall be sent to Fr. Emmanuel Chimombo and Miriam Leidinger until the designated person is identified.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that the resolutions of this workshop and those of the previous meetings are closely followed, the participants recommended that:

- A desk responsible for SCCs be established at each National Conference for proper and effective coordination of SCCs.
- Data and statistics of SCCs be collected through the National Pastoral Office. This will help the Church to have a realistic quantitative assessment of SCCs in the region.
- A comprehensive professional and scientific research be carried out on the history, the development, the literature as well as the country operations and activities of SCCs.
- Courses on SCCs be offered in Houses of Formation (Seminaries, Novitiates), and Institutions of Higher Learning.
- Taking after the example of the *Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA)* and the *National Episcopal Conference of Congo*

(CENCO), user-friendly resource materials on SCCs be developed and promoted for the community at the grassroots.

- The capacity of leaders for SCCs be strengthened.
- The idea of Youth SCCs be explored as a possible bridge up from Holy Childhood programmes.
- A Continental Coordinating Officer for SCCs, with designated roles clearly stipulated, be established on the level of the *Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM)* to strengthen guide regions that are lagging behind.
- The coordination and the collaboration of the Regional Conferences with the National Conferences be encouraged.

CONCLUSION

We express our profound gratitude to the Almighty God who made it possible for the workshop to be conducted successfully. We express our special gratitude to our partner, Missio - Pontifical Mission Society Aachen, for convening and facilitating the workshop. We are indebted to Sr. Dr. Josée Ngalula and Fr. Jean Mobiala for coordinating this meeting effectively and passionately. Thanks to the entire community of Centre Theresianum for providing us a conducive environment for the workshop.

Sincere thanks to all who contributed dearly to this workshop: the speakers, the panellists, the rapporteurs and all participants for their invaluable contributions. The Local Church of the Archdiocese of Kinshasa, through His Eminence Laurent Cardinal Monsengwo Pasinya, who apart from hosting us, officially visited us and gave us words of encouragement. For this, we are most grateful.

We dedicate these observations, commitments and recommendations to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Africa.

Given at "Centre Theresianum-Congo Kinshasa" Sunday, 10th September, 2017.

Signed by the participants of the fourth Workshop of the Network of Small Christian Communities in Africa.

Moderators:

Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Chimombo, AMECEA Pastoral Coordinator

Miriam Leidinger, missio Aachen