

REPORT OF THE AREA COORDINATOR FOR FORMATION
FOR THE ZONAL ASSEMBLY 2010
Lomé-Togo (Feb. 7-13)

First and foremost, I would like to thank all the Provincials/Regionals and the different Zonal Area Coordinators for the trust endowed on me, electing me as Zonal Area Coordinator for Formation in the last Zonal Assembly held in Kinshasa in April 2007. Ever since, I had the opportunity of coming into contact with confreres working relentlessly in formation in the AFRAM Zone.

My report is based mostly on the reports I got from the local formation boards. But before that, I would like to present to you the statistics of the AFRAM formandi and the main action plans that were realized during our term. Then I will give you our plan for the next term.

I. STATISTICS OF THE AFRAM FORMANDI 2009-2010

The present number of formandi from the AFRAM Zone is 266 (17 brother candidates and 249 candidates for priesthood) distributed in the following way:

	<u>Brotherhood</u>	<u>Priesthood</u>
Pre-novitiate :	10	124
Novitiate :	00	27
Post-novitiate :	07	98

PROVINCE REGION	Propaedeutic Philosophy Postulancy	Novitiate	Theology	OTP	Pastoral Year	ESP	Bros. in Temporary Vows	Formators
ANG	33?							4
BOT	11				4	2		6
CNG	18+7*	12	21	1	5	3	5	8
GHA	18+2*+4**	15	26		3	8	2	9
KEN	11+1*		16	1		1		6
MAD	14							3
TOG	15				3	4		3
TOTAL	134	27	63	2	15	18	7	39

*Brother candidates, **Formandi from MAD for the novitiate who are learning English

II. ACTION PLANS REALIZED

The last Zonal Assembly held in Kinshasa, D.R.Congo, had decided that *the AFRAM Formation Board (AFB) has to meet like other area coordinators once in three years. One of the two workshops planned will be held together with the AFB meeting.* During our term, the area coordination for formation organized one workshop in Zambia in 2008 (July 7- August 2) and a combined workshop and AFB meeting in Ghana in 2009 (June 8-12).

1. The workshop of Formators in Zambia was organized for formators of the pre-novitiate and novitiate stages of formation. It took place at the Franciscan Friary. The theme of the workshop was: "The impact of secularization on the religious life in Africa and the different models of formation". Twenty confreres participated in the workshop.

The main outcome of the Zambia workshop was especially, the guidelines that the group had made for propaedeutic and philosophy stages of formation. The group had made also some recommendations to the Zone which were approved by the EXECOM (*see annexe 1*).

2. The workshop in Ghana was organized for the AFB members and the rectors of the three CFCs, since this workshop was combined with the AFB meeting. The theme of the workshop was: "The present sociological, psychological, family, cultural trends of the young generation of today and how to deal with that in our formation programs". Seventeen formators participated in the workshop.

As for the AFB meeting, the major point on the agenda was the evaluation of the CFCs which have been in existence now for fifteen years. The overall result of the evaluation is positive. 60% to 95.3% of those who responded to the questionnaire (former formandi, current formandi and three formators) gave a good or very good rating to various areas that were being evaluated. On the other hand, two points received a rating lower than 60%. It is about the questions concerning the integration of JPIC in the formation program in the CFC (45.3%) and the integration of Communications (56.5%). The formators now have to take the data and interpret them to find their meaning. The AFB decided that each province/region's formation board should study the data and then send the result of its discussions to the Area Coordinator for Formation. Up to now I haven't got any feedback yet.

Beside the evaluation of the CFCs, the AFB discussed on 16 other issues that were on the agenda. As a result of the discussions, it approved 14 recommendations that were submitted to the Executive Committee for approval (*see annexe 2 and Power Point file of the evaluation*).

III. ECHOES FROM PROVINCES/REGIONS

1. ANGOLA

Angola has two formation houses: propaedeutic and philosophy. 4 confreres are engaged in formation in the two houses. For this year 2010, the province is expecting 25 students for the propaedeutic. The philosophy has at present 8 students.

The province had in the past its own novitiate that was suspended due to the lack of candidates. The few candidates from Angola had been sent to Congo for the novitiate. Since the province has already a sufficient number of candidates, it will reopen its novitiate this coming June (29).

The 7th Zonal Assembly authorized the Angola province to make the feasibility studies in view of having a 4th CFC in Angola to be presented to this Zonal Assembly (see recommendations the 7th Zonal Assembly on formation, n° 5). This recommendation was noted by the General Council. I guess that the provincial has a say on this recommendation.

2. BOTSWANA

As of now the formation program in Botswana province is concentrated in Zambia which is the only district of the province which has a continuous and consistent number of candidates through the years.

The formation program in Botswana province consists of two stages of pre-novitiate formation: Propaedeutic Year and Philosophy. There are two formation houses in the province.

Lights and shadows

Among the positive aspects of the current formation program in Zambia, we note the following:

- Consistency of the formation program: Focused on Zambia, they have enjoyed continued stream of candidates over the years.
- Raising educational standards: With completion of the new Philosophy house moved to Lusaka, the standard of education offered to our student is higher. This is also felt by the students who faced greater challenge and responded accordingly.
- Realization that formation is an integral part of our mission: This is felt particularly in Zambia where one can detect deep awareness that formation and vocation promotion are indispensable constituents of the district's apostolate. Majority of confreres are willing to participate and contribute to the formation program whenever called upon.

There are also numerous challenges:

- Internationality: Over the years the majority of the candidates come from Zambia. Since 2005 when the last group of candidates from Zimbabwe completed philosophy they have had only Zambian candidates. Internationality in the student body would be welcomed and enriching.
- Motivation: Our candidates join religious life with very diverse motivations ranging from genuine to manipulative and scheming. It remains a continuing challenge for the formation teams to recognize and discern genuine vocations.

- Local formators: With the province being relatively young there are no local formators available. The formation teams consist exclusively of non-African confreres. There is a felt need for local presence among the formators.

3. D.R. CONGO

Congo Province has 4 formation houses and one principal vocation promoter who collaborates with the vocation promoters assigned in each district in the province. To promote the vocation in the province, the provincial vocation promoter publishes a brochure entitled: “prière et service missionnaire” (*Missionary Prayer and Service*).

The propaedeutic and the novitiate communities share the same buildings. But each community has its own program. The formators in charge are happy about the collaboration. The province is thinking of separating the two entities, but there is no precise decision yet.

At present the novitiate in Congo welcomes also candidates from Angola and Madagascar. The Local Formation Board encourages the presence of the foreign candidates at the initial stage of formation. This promotes in our formation houses a true spirit of lived internationally.

As you know, CNG province has one of the CFCs in the Zone. At present CFC Kinshasa has students from Angola, Benin, Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Togo, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

It is important to mention that the Congo province is making a big effort to promote the brother vocation. Almost each year the province has a brother candidate in the novitiate. This year the province has 7 candidates in the pre-novitiate program and 5 in the post-novitiate program. The province has elaborated a detailed formation program for brothers that has to be evaluated. Having assured the basic formation in spirituality and community life, each brother is encouraged to go for a professional training in the field of work he is interested in. While doing so, the need of the province and the interest of the brother concerned are taken into consideration.

Concerns

The major concern in Congo is the lack of formators. Only very few confreres involved in formation are trained for the job. Those who could do the job considering their abilities and good sense for formation are not willing to be assigned to the formation work.

4. GHANA

GHA province has 4 formation houses: Philosophy, novitiate, Brother Formation house and CFC. It is important to mention here that Ghana is the only province that has a separate formation house for Brothers in temporary vows. Actually, there are two young brothers in the house who are doing their academic studies. One is taking building technology and the other one computer science.

All postulants follow the three year philosophy curriculum as designed by the St. Victor's Major Seminary Tamale, except the candidates for brotherhood. The latter selectively attend courses under the guidance of a formator for two years before joining the novitiate.

There is reasonably appreciable interest in the postulants in academic matters and for learning. However there are factors that are detrimental to a better academic formation that could be improved upon. Some of them are: - [i] The insufficient knowledge of the English language of the postulants makes it difficult for them to take advantage of reading to go deeper into academic studies, though they do make efforts. [ii] The lack of basic books, or books that would cater to their needs at this stage of formation both academic and psycho-spiritual...

The house organizes workshops/input sessions with the help of outside experts, during the holidays, on human development and psycho-human maturity for the formandi on this stage of formation.

The Novitiate in Ghana welcomes our students from Togo/Benin and from our English speaking countries. There will be, for the first time, candidates from Madagascar for this coming school year. They are now learning English.

At the CFC, formation program begins in September and lasts till late June. However, in the next academic year 2010/2011, it will run from August to May. It is worth mentioning that the formation program in CFC-Tamale is largely dependent on and influenced by the academic calendar of St. Victor's Major Seminary where our students pursue their Theological studies.

The Common Formation Program covers the academic, pastoral, religious and spiritual formation, human development and community life of the formandi.

Confreres involved in formation are happy of the peaceful collaboration and teamwork among them.

5. KENYA

Kenya-Tanzania Province has 3 formation houses and 1 full time vocation promoter as well as 1 part time Spiritual Director, whose services are availed by all the 3 formation houses. 6 personnel are involved in full time formation work in the 3 formation houses. The formation programme in the province as such has matured progressively over the years. The Local Formation Board (LFB) which meets quite regularly pays attention to the ongoing improvement of the formation program and to how to make it relevant and viable to our current times, while striving to remain faithful to the directives and requirements of the constitutions of our Society, formation manuals and General chapter guidelines.

Confreres are supportive and always available for conferences, recollections/retreats, and spiritual directions.

Concerns

Dwindling financial resources is a challenge that we are aware of. Some of the initiatives of the province to meet this challenge are bearing some fruit. Our formators are also taking up retreat/recollection ministry, with a view to impart spiritual nourishment as well as to earn some income to the house.

Another major concern of the province is lack of trained personnel to be assigned as formators. The issue is being looked at seriously by the LFB and due suggestions will be made to the Provincial and his council. Some suggestions have been already forwarded. A serious effort at identifying and borrowing trained personnel from other provinces has been initiated.

Special concerns of the Philosophy House in Otiende

- No space for sports and gardening, (Every Friday, students go to CFC – a distance of 8 km -- for volleyball or football).
- The building needs regular repair, and the structure seems to be in constant danger of falling down, due to poor design and workmanship.
- The house has no real conference and library rooms.
- With 10 as the largest number of students that can be comfortably accommodated, there will be no more space for more students. The implication of this is obvious.
- Students travel to school for class, spending an average of 1 hour and 30 minutes on the road each day, and 3 hours on Wednesdays (for afternoon classes). Besides time, the accumulative financial cost of all this is enormous, almost impractical to be allowed to continue.

It is a known fact that the current facility has no scope for any manual work and sports. The young formandi with so much energy and strength are just confined to the 4 walls. It affects their growth tremendously. We need a swift action plan in this matter.

6. MADAGASCAR

MAD has only one formation house which is located in Fianarantsoa. Academically, there are three levels of seminarians in the house: from propaedeutic to Philosophy II, but they are all considered as postulants. The region accepts only those who have their Baccalaureate. For the first year in the formation, they send the candidates to the different SVD parishes for their foretaste of the life and mission of SVD missionaries before they could be accepted to the postulancy. These newcomers stay in the parishes for around 9 months. So though there is only one formation house, our parishes serve also as places of formation, especially for the newcomers. The vocation director coordinates this first year of formation.

The region is sending their formandi for novitiate in Congo and Ghana. It has a plan to start its own novitiate due to the increasing number of candidates. But the Generalate asked the region to make feasibility studies before doing so. We don't have the result of these studies yet.

Lights and shadows in formation work:

Light: the cooperation and positive response given by the seminarians in the formation, the cooperation and positive relationship among formators, the positive support of the confreres to the formation work.

Shadows: the miscomprehension of some confreres in the way of handling formation and their lack of effort to know it better before giving some judgments; the lack of cooperation of one or two confreres in the parishes in welcoming formandi in their parishes who are there for pastoral exposures.

7. TOGO/BENIN

Togo/Benin province has only one formation house. Formation in the province is organized such as the postulancy and philosophy are together. It extends over three (3) years following the requirements of the seminary where our candidates are studying. The three year period helps our formators to give a systematic and harmonious introduction to our candidates and an integral training of formandi to religious and missionary charisms of the Society of the Divine Word.

Since the beginning of the academic year 2009/2010, the province has reoriented our formandi of philosophy to the College of philosophy and the Human Sciences (ISPSH Don Bosco), subsequent to the decision of the Bishops of Togo to move gradually the department of philosophy from the John Paul II major seminary in Lomé (South) to Aledjo / Kara (North of the country).

IV. PLANS FOR THE NEXT TERM

During its meeting in June last year in Ghana, the AFB suggested the organization of a formation course for formators that would be held in Ghana for the whole month of June 2011. For this suggestion, the AFB requested the Area Coordinator for Formation to contact the director of the renewal course in Nemi, Fr. Pates, to design a program for the course.

Another suggestion was the planning of the next meeting. Taking into account the organization of the General Chapter in 2012, the AFB suggested that the next meeting be in the middle of June 2010 in D.R. Congo.

V. REMARKS

1. Most of the provinces mentioned the lack of formators in their provinces. This is one of the major concerns in the Zone. What we need here is a concerted effort and collaboration from the entire zone. The exchange of formators in the zone, for example, should be encouraged.
2. As you can notice in the table above, we have very few brother candidates in the zone. I would like to remind you the questions Fr. General had asked in his address during our last Assembly in Kinshasa: *“We need to ask ourselves how seriously we are promoting the brother vocation in the zone, not only in terms of getting more brother candidates into our formation houses but also in terms of fostering a proper appreciation of the brother vocation among the people. How well thought out is our formation program for the brothers? How do we relate to one another as brothers and priests in our communities? Does each one of us really value the brother vocation in our Society?”* I hope that this Assembly is a good opportunity to come out with concrete resolutions on what can be done in the Zone in this matter. The recommendations of the last Brothers Vocation Assembly may be of help.

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Area Coordinator for Formation

ANNEX 1

Guidelines for Formation during the Propedeutic Year *(This applies also for the Brother formation)*

1. Basic Human Formation (the focal point for the propaedeutic stage of formation)

- **Human Maturity**
 - Means: various tools for deepening of self esteem and self awareness such as Genogram, Journal writing, *Enneagram*, *MBTI*, etc., exploring psycho-emotional aspects, confronting fear, lack of openness, anxiety, etc., learning about human sexuality, etiquette.
- **Responsibility**
 - Means: suitable assignments and accountability.
- **Integrity**
 - Means: self evaluation, peer evaluation, fraternal correction, ratio, working towards cohesion between Christian beliefs and practical behaviours.
- **Health and Hygiene**
 - Means: formation and information on health matters, sports, body care, etc.

2. Basic Faith Formation

- **Deep relationship with Christ**
 - Means: prayer, meditation, spiritual direction, retreat/recollections, spiritual reading, use of Scripture in various ways (Personal/Common reading, Bible sharing, Lectio Divina), creative liturgies which reflect cultural, political, economic, social, and ecological aspects, SVD devotions, regular participation in the sacraments.
- **Deep and informed Christian faith**
 - Means: study of Christian teaching, sharing of faith experiences, catechetical formation, formation of conscience.

3. Formation for Intercultural Community Living

- **Knowledge and appreciation of one's own culture and tradition**
 - Means: cultural exchanges, dialogues, celebration of national days and regional feasts.
- **Ability to live and work in diverse cultural settings**
 - Means: living in intercultural community.
- **Openness to others**
 - Means: community activities such as group dynamics, recreation, games, manual work
- **Sense of belonging to the SVD family**
 - Means: sharing one's own resources, time and talents.
- **Sensitivity to the needs and sensibilities of others**
 - Means: exchange of ideas, views, and experiences.

4. Formation for Missionary Service

- **Willingness and ability to serve**
 - Means: initiation into various pastoral activities such as immersions, family visits, catechesis.
- **Mission awareness**
 - Means: inviting visiting missionaries to share their experiences.
- **Global awareness**
 - Means: staying informed and participating in events and processes taking place in the Church and in the world.
- **Capacity for dialogue**
 - Means: Guided and processed exposure to other cultures, other religions, poor and marginalized, and faith seekers in the spirit the fourfold Prophetic Dialogue.

5. Academic Formation

- Capacity for effective learning
 - Means: improving language skills, study methods, fostering reading habits, computer and other necessary skills.
- General knowledge
 - Means: discussions, debates, reading, exploring topics of interest.

Guidelines during philosophy stage

During Philosophy, formation continues to focus on the five areas outlined in the guidelines for propaedeutic year with academic formation assuming the central role. Thus continuity of the program should be maintained. The following should be emphasized and implemented during Philosophical studies:

1. In the areas of Basic Faith Formation and Basic Human Formation students should be guided and helped in integrating the knowledge which they acquire through studies into their spiritual and religious life and into development of their personalities
2. A course of foreign language (French or English) should take place at suitable time
3. The students should undertake regular pastoral ministry
4. Students should undergo at least one directed retreat during philosophy
5. Peer review and evaluation should preferably be done in the middle rather than at the end of the academic year. It should be preceded by adequate orientation and its results should be conveyed to the formandi concerned.
6. Students capable of a more profound Philosophical education should be encouraged to pursue it
7. In the last year of philosophical studies (postulancy) particular attention should be paid to discernment together with introduction to SVD constitutions and spirituality, religious life, and evangelical counsels.

N.B. For the Brother Formation, it is recommended to follow the guidelines proposed by the Generalate “You are all brothers” and make use of it in order to produce a suitable program in each province/region of AFRAM.

Recommendations from the AFRAM Formators’ Workshop held in Lusaka, Zambia, July 2008

1. The assembly proposes the following stages for pre-novitiate program as mandatory
 - Vocation promotion/candidate selection
 - Propaedeutic stage (not less than 1 year)
 - Philosophy (with the specific preparatory period of not less than 1 year called postulancy directly before going to novitiate)
2. Given the pressures of the final year of philosophy (thesis writing, final exams) this assembly proposes that postulancy period should be at least one year to allow for lighter yet systematic introduction of themes intended for this period.
3. This assembly proposes that provinces/regions/missions in the zone make it mandatory to have a year long propaedeutic year before sending aspirants to philosophy/Postulancy. In this context the assembly proposes that the provinces of Ghana, Togo/Benin introduce propaedeutic year into their formation program and that the province of Angola streamline their program in line with the proposed guidelines.
4. The assembly proposes the following guidelines as mandatory for propaedeutic stage of formation (see guidelines for propaedeutic).
5. The assembly proposes the following guidelines as mandatory for philosophy stage of formation (see guidelines for philosophy).
6. This assembly proposes to appoint men of integrity and with proper training/skills as formators. Their ongoing formation should be given priority. Regular zonal and local workshops and seminars to share their experiences should be held.
7. Considering particular situation of the AFRAM zone, this assembly proposes that the language taught in the zone during the pre-novitiate stage of formation should be French or English.
8. Any documents concerning formation should be sent to the provincials and as well as to formation communities.

ANNEX 2

Recommendations of AFB Meeting Nsawam, Ghana, June 2009

1. We recommend that the CFC Formation Manual be revised to focus more on the formative rather than administrative aspect of formation and be made more culturally relevant.
2. We recommend that the ESP policy as it stands be modified to allow provinces to send students for theology studies outside AFRAM Zone.
The AFB in consultation with provincials involved makes recommendations to the Executive Committee regarding these assignments.
3. We recommend that, while in principle the use of mobile phones in CFCs is permitted, specific guidelines and regulations concerning their use be formulated and decided upon by Local Formation Boards and their respective provincial councils.
4. We recommend that the CFC in Nairobi obtains more clarifications on the issue of BA and STB academic programs in order to ascertain their suitability for our formandi.
5. We recommend that the OTP program be open for all. Recommendation of the formandi for OTP is done by the CFC formation teams in consultation with their home provinces.
Priority should be given to those formandi who have not gone outside of their own countries.
6. We recommend that all official information and communication between sending provinces and formandi should follow proper channels to include the formation teams at the CFCs and the local provincials.
7. We recommend that the CFCs in Kinshasa and Tamale explore possibilities of adjusting the timing of their pastoral year/OTP in order to allow staff and formandi sufficient time for adjustment/processing/evaluation between their return to CFCs and final vows.
8. We recommend that formandi going for and returning from pastoral year/OTP should be accompanied by relevant documents such as evaluation reports and covering letters indicating areas particularly needing attention and accompaniment.
This will assist sending/receiving provinces and on-site supervisors in the process of accompaniment.
9. The AFB meeting re-affirms the existing policy in relation to recruitment of candidates from countries where SVDs are not currently present. Far-reaching caution should be exercised if such candidates are to be accepted nonetheless.
10. We recommend that a more forceful approach be used by provincials in asking for formators for their CFCs from other provinces/regions.
11. We recommend that the CFC formation teams identify potential candidates for future formation work from among the formandi and make relevant recommendations before final vows.
12. We strongly recommend that there be an SVD academic presence in the institutes/seminaries attended by our formandi.
13. We recommend that formation teams be particularly attentive to any early signs or tendencies towards alcohol or any other form of addictive/abusive behavior.
14. We recommend that the CFC formandi and formators keep regular contact with the sending provinces and vice versa.