

AFRAM ZONAL ASSEMBLY 2010 Mozambique Mission Report

This year the SVD Mission in Mozambique will complete 13 years of its recent history, but for the first time the Divine Word Missionaries came in 1911. So next year we will celebrate a hundred years anniversary, despite of the short duration of that presence (6 years).

A Short Description of the Country

Mozambique will complete this year 35 years of independence and 18 years of peace after the civil war. Politically the country is stable, but the governing party demonstrates strong tendencies toward single-party policy. Economically Mozambique is growing up, however the majority of the country and population lives in poverty, sometimes even without the basic alimentary needs adequately supplied. The number of schools increased in recent years; on the other hand the level of education is decreasing, partially because of the policy of “automatic passage” of the students, promoted by the government. The healthcare system becomes better but it is still unable to respond to all necessities. Malaria and AIDS continue as the main causes of deaths (more than 50%). Corruption continues as a serious illness of public life in Mozambique.

The SVD Mission

At present there are 13 SVD confreres in Mozambique and only one of them is brother. Considering the origins we are from 10 nationalities: 7 from ASPAC, 2 from PANAM, 2 from AFRAM and 2 from EUROPE. Last year we received 2 confreres appointed to Angola for Portuguese language course. We have 3 more confreres from Indonesia appointed to our Mission.

We are distributed in 4 communities: two of them in the diocese of Nacala in the north of the country, and the other two in the capital Maputo. In 2008 two districts were created: North and South, formed by two communities each.

Even though being in the same country, the distance between the districts is over 2.000 km. Therefore there are considerable social, cultural and linguistic differences. Maputo constitutes urban context, where the conditions of life are quite good, without big distances, exposure to illnesses, with access to electricity, communication, healthcare, etc. We work there in one parish. There is also a secondary school in its compound. In 2008 we opened an SVD house in the capital as our central house. At present there is the residence of the superior and the language students.

In the north we are in rural area. There are two SVD communities which respond for 4 parishes and one more pastoral area. Our confreres sometimes have to face very challenging life with great distances to run, roads in bad conditions, illnesses, especially malaria, poverty of the population, low level of education, etc.

Recent years were very turbulent for our Mission. Although we spoke very much about prophetic dialogue, what many times happened was an anarchic dialogue. I do not feel free to go into details here. The time brings solutions of the problems, but the price we paid is high.

Between the main difficulties we had to face there is instability of the personnel. New confreres are coming, but a number of the more experienced left. Consequently the number of confreres remains more or less the same, but it is not easy to maintain our large responsibilities, because the new confreres need time for the insertion.

With the exception of the superior, all confreres are engaged full time in pastoral work. However, the parishes are for us also platforms for involvement in other areas. Two of our parishes have pastoral centers. The help for malnourished children in one of them is worth mentioning. In Maputo we administer a government aided secondary school. Some confreres are involved in some diocesan commissions. We are constantly concerned about the characteristic dimensions of our Congregation, but so far we have not managed to go forward with more comprehensive and systematic activity. One confrere helps as a teacher in the Interdiocesan Theological Seminary in Maputo.

It has already been for some years we are talking about the opening of the initial SVD formation. There are some young men interested in being SVD missionaries. Yet the internal difficulties and lack of a good place did not permit to complete our projects. Recently the General Council approved our proposal of the program for that purpose. We are going to proceed.

We managed, however, to give continuity to the OTP program. We had already two confreres from United States and one from Brazil doing that program. At the moment one more from USC is requesting to come.

Financial Self-reliance

The Mission prepared a proposal of the program for that purpose in 2007. What we achieved of it are small projects of support like chicken or garden. At the parish in Maputo the tithe was introduced. That increased considerably the funds of parish and consequently it increased also the support for our community there, but that is not sufficient. In the north the diocese left for our responsibility big amount of land which could serve for agricultural activity, but we do not have people prepared for that purpose. Some confreres are looking for benefactors, but in general that support goes for special projects and not for our ordinary expenses.

The Year of the Priest

The bishops of Mozambique addressed to the priests a letter on that occasion, in which they exposed their concerns. The letter was introduced on our recent assembly, but there was no debate in order to reflect and answer in some way to the content. The topic remains open.

The Assembly on the Brother Vocation

The final document was distributed in our communities and it was also on the agenda of our assembly. In general the recommendations were well accepted. There should be some more reflection on some issues on our district meeting.

Plans for the Future

- More consolidation of the stability of the personnel. The reception and insertion of the new confreres is a part of this concern.
- The beginning of SVD initial formation.
- Improvement of the activities in characteristic dimensions of the Congregation.
- Expansion of the Mission. At present we have requests from three dioceses to accept new places of work. However in this context we have to evaluate our capacity.

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