

Encouraging More SCCs Courses and Workshops in the Normal Curriculum of Major Seminaries in Eastern Africa

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are very important in the future of the [AMECEA](#)¹ Region. The main goals of the “Mission of AMECEA” include “revitalizing and continued emphasis on the role of the Small Christian Communities in evangelization.”² SCCs continue to be the church on the move, the church from below. For the whole of Africa Nigerian Jesuit priest Emmanuel Orobator points out: “Small Christian Communities represent a way of *becoming* church; they are not a finished product or prefabricated ecclesial reality. In this sense, *process* takes precedence over *event* as key markers of the ecclesiological comprehension of Small Christian Communities.”³

The top six future challenges, priorities and actions for SCCs in Eastern Africa are based on our in-depth critical evaluation/assessment, ongoing research/surveys and a reading of the contemporary signs of the times in Africa. They are part of the “Action/Pastoral Planning Step” of the Pastoral Spiral.

1. Choose good leaders in SCCs in Eastern Africa. This is within the context of committed, ongoing leadership of priests, religious and laypeople within a pastoral plan.
2. Form SCC leaders/animators/facilitators/coordinators in a deeper evangelization that integrates African values and Christian values (“Truly African, Truly Christian”) as part of an overall pastoral strategy of forming and training pastoral agents.
3. Train SCC leaders/animators/facilitators/coordinators in animation, facilitation and coordination skills. Set up Mobile SCC Training Teams on the Eastern Africa, national, diocesan, deanery, parish and outstation levels. The most recent example is the Interim Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team under the Pastoral Department of AMECEA based in Nairobi, Kenya.⁴ Use the mass media especially the internet and the social media for these SCCs training programs.

¹ AMECEA is an acronym for "Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa." It is a service organization for the National Episcopal Conferences of the nine English-speaking countries of Eastern Africa, namely Eritrea (1993), Ethiopia (1979), Kenya (1961), Malawi (1961), South Sudan (2011), Sudan (1973), Tanzania (1961), Uganda (1961) and Zambia (1961). The Republic of South Sudan became independent on 9 July, 2011, but the two Sudans remain part of one Episcopal Conference. Somalia (1995) and Djibouti (2002) are Affiliate Members. AMECEA is one of the eight Regional Episcopal Conferences of [SECAM](#) (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar).

² “Mission of AMECEA,” AMECEA Website, retrieved on 11 March, 2012, <http://www.amecea.org/index.php/component/content/article/2-amecea/2-vision>

³ Emmanuel Orobator, “Small Christian Communities as a New Way,” p. 125.

⁴ Ghanaian Bishop Richard Baawobr states: “An important service that AMECEA could offer concerns the formation of pastoral workers that cannot always be done at diocesan or even

4. A newer priority is training of SCC members in computer and internet skills for pastoral activity and evangelization that includes: writing for the internet; preparing Powerpoint Presentations on SCCs; the use of online “Search” features especially Google; and the use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and What’sApp.
5. Ongoing formation and training of all SCC members with special focus on the meaning and importance of SCC, *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*, family catechesis, justice and peace, social awareness, Jesus Christ’s methods of evangelizing and mission outreach.
6. Encourage more courses and workshops on SCCs in the normal curriculum of the major seminaries, theological institutes, universities and houses of formation of both men and women that include some kind of planned practical action and social outreach. There should be a focus on Pastoral Theology.⁵ While most of the major seminaries and theological institutes in Eastern Africa are affiliated with universities in Rome and thus subject to tight curriculum requirements, Kenyan Bishop Peter Kihara, a long-time member of the Kenyan Catholic Bishops Seminary Episcopal Commission, points out that the Vatican should recognize the SCCs pastoral priority in Eastern Africa and allow it to be included in the seminary curriculum.⁶

A new strategy is proposed for courses in the Pastoral (Practical) Theology Department. These courses can be Cycle Courses that are offered every two years or every four years. There are four possibilities:

- a. Some can be full semester, required, core courses (every theological student/ seminarian takes this course during his or her training).
- b. Some can be elective courses that are in the Lecture or Seminar style.
- c. Some can be an intensive one-week module in which three double periods are given each day to qualify as a full semester course.
- d. Some can be two, three or four-day workshops: a single workshop or a series of workshops.⁷

national level. Institutions like CUEA, Nyegezi, Gaba offer something, but it might be helpful to organize short courses (a few weeks) for different ministries at diocesan level who in turn, could help form ministers in Small Christian Communities.” *AMECEA 50 Years*, p. 112.

⁵ Pope Francis stresses the importance of Pastoral Theology. He maintains that theology without a pastoral dimension becomes an abstract ideology. Therefore, dogmatic theology and pastoral theology should be interrelated; they need each other. All of them drive towards pastoral goals such as mercy and forgiveness.

⁶ Peter Kihara’s comments during the Pontifical Mission Societies Missionary Awareness Animation Team Visit to St Joseph’s (Meru) Seminary in Nairobi, Kenya on 28 April, 2013.

⁷ SCCs Workshops are designed to be an intensive, full time experience incorporating all the prayer time and other activities of the day. DVDs on SCCs are shown in the evening as an official part of the workshop. Particularly valuable is the 43-minute instructional video *The Church in the Neighborhood: Small Christian Communities* (with Swahili and Arabic

- e. Some can be one day sessions spread over a semester or a year.

All these courses are pastoral ministry courses with a practical component (practicum). The ideal is where every student (including every future priest⁸) has a full course in the theology and practice of SCCs. This would include an emphasis on “The Role of the Priest in the Formation and Animation of SCCs.”

A recent Case Study is the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Workshop at Christ the King Major Seminary, Nyeri from 22 to 25 February, 2018. Participants were 307 seminarians covering the eight years of spiritual year, philosophy and theology and some faculty members. The Facilitation Team was Mwanajumuiya Padri Moses Muriira, Mwanajumuiya Dr. Alphonse Omolo, Mwanajumuiya Padri Joseph Healey and Mwanajumuiya Padri Emmanuel Chimombo. They are part of the Interim Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team under the Pastoral Department of AMECEA based in Nairobi, Kenya.

Topics included:

- Basic Characteristics of SCCs (Life, Activities and Services/Ministries).
- Facilitation Skills in SCCs.
- The Role of Priests, Brothers, Sisters, Seminarians and Catechists in Promoting and Animating SCCs.
- *Bible Sharing/Bible* Reflection in SCCs especially using the Seven Steps.
- Importance of Forming and Animating Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) in Kenya

The seminarian participants were encouraged to use these two resources:

1. Chimombo, Emmanuel, Joseph G. Healey, Rita Ishengoma, Rose Musimba, Febian P. Mulenga and Alphonse C. L. Omolo, (eds.), *Strengthening the Growth of Small Christian Communities in Africa -- A Training Handbook for Facilitators*, Nairobi: AMECEA Pastoral Department and Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2017. Two editions of the paperback.
<http://e.paulinesafrica.org/index.php/book/bookDetails/1356>

versions). Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1995. Segment One is “The Life of the Small Christian Communities” and Segment Two is “Services [Ministries] in the Small Christian Communities.” Another helpful DVD is the 57-minute instructional video *Njia Mpya ya Kuishi na Kueneza Injili: Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kristo* (Swahili for *A New Way of Living and Proclaiming the Church: Small Christian Communities*). Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1985. It presents 12 SCCs in action in Kenya and Tanzania.

⁸ In interviews and conversations, bishops in the AMECEA countries have stated that seminarians should have a full, semester-long required course on SCCs during their seminary training and practical experience in SCCs when they do pastoral ministry in parishes during their holidays and during their Pastoral Year. The bishops emphasize that it is too late to wait until they are ordained priests and serving in parishes to introduce them to this key pastoral priority.

Ebook available through Paulines Publications Africa on Android Platforms only (smartphones, tablets, etc.) – not on Apple or Microsoft. Paperback (Print on Demand -- POD) and Ebook available on Amazon. https://www.amazon.com/Strengthening-Growth-Christian-Communities-Africa/dp/1973299348/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1513852606&sr=1-1&keywords=chimombo

- 80-page booklet to assist in SCCs training courses for SCCs facilitators and animators in Africa.
 - Preface by H. E. Souraphiel Cardinal Berhaneyesus, Archbishop of Addis Ababa Archdiocese, Ethiopia and current Chairman of AMECEA.
 - Recommends 15 topics and sessions for an effective training course on this key pastoral priority of the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa. They include: arrival of the participants, introduction of the participants, logistics, sharing of roles and responsibilities, participant's fears or concerns, training topics, expectations and training objectives.
 - Includes a rich bibliography that comprises references, additional reading materials, videos, DVDs as well as accompanying rich annexes. The new handbook recommends a checklist of 16 common activities in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa today for effective training of SCCs facilitators.
2. Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website (including the Small Christian Communities Facebook Page). www.smallchristiancommunities.org
This website includes the free, online Ebook:

Healey, Joseph, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications – CUEA Press Double *Spearhead* Nos. 199-200 (Print Version 2012 and 1st Reprint 2014). 163 pages. The Online Digital Version, regularly revised and updated from the 2012 print version, is available as a free, online Ebook containing 1,011 pages as of 3 March, 2018 on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/ebooks/47-ebooks-.html>
http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build_new.pdf

The APPENDIX has “27 Online E-Resource Materials on the On-going Formation and Training of Small Christian Community (SCC) Members.”

Our Facilitation Team was very impressed by the 14 House SCCs at Christ the King Seminary located in the residence halls. These House SCCs of seminarians meet on Tuesday for a SCC Mass (*Jumuiya* Mass) and on Sunday afternoon for a prayer session in their respective houses. This is a good model and example for all the Major Seminaries in Kenya and in the whole AMECEA Region.

May the light from this SCCs Workshop at the Christ the King Major Seminary radiate to other parts of Kenya and Africa. May the 307 seminarians reach out to young Catholic lay people and promote Youth Small Christian Communities in this “2018 Year of Young People.”



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NOTE: This article is published in Issue No. 8 (2018) of *Mouth Piece*, the Christ the King Major Seminary magazine in Nyeri, Kenya.