

Revitalization of Small Christians Communities (SCCs) as Tools for Grassroots Evangelization in South Sudan

Despite the danger of civil unrest, delegates from seven dioceses in South Sudan were very brave to participate in a Workshop on “Revitalization of Small Christians Communities (SCCs) as Tools for Grassroots Evangelization in South Sudan” that took place in Juba, South Sudan on 21-22 October 2015. This was the seventh in a series of national and metropolitan SCCs Workshops in the nine AMECEA countries.

The objectives of the workshop that was organized by the AMECEA Pastoral Department in collaboration with Pastoral Department of the Sudan Catholic Bishops Conference (SCBC) were:

1. To share experiences on SCCs in the parishes/dioceses and to learn from one another.
2. To reflect on the role of the different individuals and groups in supporting the growth and development of SCCs in the parishes/dioceses.
3. To enhance networking and collaboration among the Catholic groups, parishes and dioceses in strengthening the growth of SCCs.

During the two day workshop, the delegates shared their experiences of SCCs in their dioceses and parishes. It was observed that only three out of seven dioceses have made the building of SCCs as part of their pastoral plan. Among the major reasons that were given about this situation are: the long civil war to independence; the current internal conflict; the displacement of people and the lack of skilled pastoral agents in some of the dioceses.

Despite this situation, the delegates in their strategic resolutions and plans expressed their determination to use every situation to make the building of SCCs is a pastoral priority in all the dioceses. When making their work plans the common areas of concern and recommendations were the following:

1. All Diocesan Pastoral Teams to present to the local ordinaries, Bishops and Archbishops, the relevance of considering the building of SCCs as a new way of becoming church so that it is included in the Pastoral Strategic Plans.
2. The Solidarity Pastoral Team of SCBC to intensify the Trainer of Trainers (TOT) Workshops around the Dioceses, offer capacity building to Diocesan Pastoral Teams and use the radio as a means of formation and sharing about SCCs.
3. Involvement of priests as key pastoral agents in the implementation process especially in those dioceses that are starting the building of SCCs.
4. In those dioceses where SCCs have been initiated, to intensify the involvement of the Lay Leaders, Parish Councils and all the laity in sensitization on the importance of SCCs in promoting the pastoral life of the Church.
5. To design plans on emphasizing follow-down through the Diocesan and Parish Pastoral Teams.

The facilitators of the workshop were Father Febian Pikiti Mulenga, AMECEA Pastoral Coordinator and Dr. Alphonse Omolo, a member of the Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team. The twenty-four delegates who participated in the workshop were from the following Arch/dioceses: Juba (1); Malakal (2); Rumbek (4), Torit (4); Tombura-Yambio (1); Wau (4); Yei (4) and the Pastoral Solidarity Team (4).

In his closing remarks, Father Philip Bingo, the Pastoral Coordinator of SCBC, expressed gratitude to AMECEA Secretariat for the gesture of solidarity and for offering capacity building to the members of the Inter-Diocesan Pastoral Team.

A report from Cynthia Kayla on the Juba, South Sudan Workshop on the SCCs Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org>) puts our lives in perspective:

The training of Pastoral Coordinators on Small Christian Communities (SCCs) from all the dioceses of South Sudan has begun today 20 October, 2015 in earnest in Juba. In an informal sharing during breakfast, the participant from Yambio Diocese shared a heart-breaking story on how he had to pass through roadblocks mounted by different groups of rebels. At times he had to be taken through bushy paths in order to avoid any harm to his life. Thank God he got to Juba safely. Hmmm! Makes me wonder how we take peace for granted. Don't we?

South Sudan: Solidarity Pastoral Team Supporting Capacity Building of Pastoral Agents

The Solidarity Pastoral Team in Sudan and South Sudan has continued to promote capacity building of the agents of evangelization and church institutions in South Sudan. In 2005, the Congregations of Religious Sisters, Brothers and Priests, in responding to the pastoral needs of the Sudan Catholic Bishops Conference (SCBC) after the end of the civil war, decided to work harness their resources in order to work with bishops in promoting holistic work of evangelization.

Speaking to the *AMECEA Online News*, Sister Annette St-Amour IHM, who is a member of the Solidarity Pastoral Team, said, “Since then, we have worked together with the SCBC to support and establish the Teacher Training Institutes in Malakal and Yambio and rebuild the Health Training Institute in Wau.”

In addition, the Solidarity Pastoral Team has, since 2009, has collaborated with Father Philip Bingo of the National Pastoral Department of SCBC and all the dioceses in promoting capacity building to the key pastoral agents in all the dioceses.

Sister Annette said, “Specifically, Solidarity Pastoral was established initially to help support the formation of clergy, religious and lay people and to deliver a peace and reconciliation project. And responding to the impact of the on-going war and conflict before and after independence, the Solidarity Pastoral Team has facilitated programs related with Trauma-Healing, Women as Carriers of Peace and providing pastoral care of Internally Displaced People (IDP) in the Malakal UN Protection of Civilians Camp.”

Some of those who are currently involved in the Solidarity Pastoral Team in South Sudan are Father Manuel Ginete CM, Sister Annette St-Amour IHM, and Father Mike Bassano MM who are part of the team promoting the capacity building of the pastoral agents in South Sudan. Others are Sister Cathy Arata and Sister Barbara Palenczy who have coordinated and facilitated Trauma-Healing Experiences and Workshops for Women as Carriers of Peace.

“Despite the current situation of war, displacement of people and hunger,” Sister Annette said, “We have a missionary commitment to be where the people of God are. They are a wonderful people. Our presence is a testimony of hope and assurance that God has not abandoned his people.”

Sister Annette was speaking during the workshop for the Inter-Diocesan Pastoral Team from the dioceses of South Sudan. The workshop was held in Juba and conducted by the AMECEA Pastoral Department in collaboration with SCBC on the theme “Revitalization of Small Christians Communities (SCCs) as Tools for Grassroots Evangelization in South Sudan.”











Photos by Alphonse Omolo