

LAYIBI DECEMBER 2011



The coordinators of the Comboni Lay Missionaries (CLM) of the 12 Comboni provinces of French-speaking and English-speaking Africa and of Mozambique met for the first time on December 10-16 in Layibi, Uganda. Thirteen priests, a Comboni Sister and nine Lay Comboni Missionaries attended the meeting. The main objective of the meeting was to reflect on the concrete situation of the CLM in Africa, in order to foster their growth based on the specific situation of Africa and keeping in mind the current challenges the CLM face in that continent.

In this sense, participants were informed of the texts and the conclusions of the various CLM's international meetings and documents of the MCCJ on CLM and accepted them as valid also for Africa. However, they found it necessary to stress some important aspects for Africa today, as follows:

Mission, vocation and identity

Mission

- **Meaning of Mission:** *The mission for all CLM comes from a concrete situation that touches and that asks for an answer. The CLM promote the missionary vocation.*
- **Objective:** *The aim of the mission for all CLM is to leave. The CLM live the mission "Ad Gentes" as an answer to their vocation.*

The mission includes the work of evangelization, of MA and the vocational promotion. In Africa we underline the field of MA and JPIC.

Vocation

- *The CLM vocation is an experience of Christ that calls through Comboni's charisma and is confirmed by the Church.*
- *The CLM vocation needs to be discerned, a spiritual direction, the prayer and formation.*
- *It's a life time vocation.*

Identity

Layperson

- *Are men or women, single or married, and mature.*
- *Involved in the secular life (work, family...)*
- *Aware of the value of the cultural diversity, they are formed in a human, professional and Christian way.*
- *In the country of origin they support themselves by their own work.*
- *They work for the values of the Kingdom of God, promoting the evangelization and liberation of people.*
- *They have a Christian vocation and the sense of ecclesial fellowship*
- *They have a mature faith and clear motivation for the missions.*
- *They are motivated by their option to follow Jesus Christ in an ecclesial and community context.*
 - *By encouraging in a missionary way the local Church and the society in which they live.*
 - *By working at the service of human liberation, of justice and peace.*
- *The CLM live their missionary service as witnesses of their Christian life.*

Missionary

- *The CLM live the mission “Ad Gentes” in answer to their Christian vocation.*
- *They have a clear and positive disposition to go to the mission among those non-evangelized people or those still needing to strengthen their faith as Christian communities.*
- *The CLM want to share (giving and receiving) their life (faith, capacities, etc.) among the people to whom they are sent.*
- *As Christians the CLM announce the Gospel:*
 - *With their testimony of life;*
 - *With their commitment in the civil society by means of their work and at the service of the integral human development, of human liberation, of justice and peace;*
 - *With their commitment in pastoral activities, promoting a ministerial Church;*
 - *Promoting the missionary awareness of the Church.*
- *They promote the missionary vocation.*
- *From the point of view of the poor making them the main protagonists of their own liberation.*
- *The CLM work in communion with the local Church.*

Comboni

As the Comboni Family, the CLM live their vocation through Daniel Comboni’s charisma, re-creating it by the light of their lay status.

In general they work in co-responsibility and in collaboration with the Comboni Family.

This supposes:

- *Identification with the charisma, the founder's knowledge and his spirituality, to be witness of Jesus' Gospel.*
- *"To Save Africa with Africa" being promoters and animators of local laypeople.*
- *To make a preferential option for the least in society (the excluded and impoverished), which to be authentic, is born of faith, which influences the world of politics, of education, of the economy, etc. willing to bear the cross with the crucified of today.*
- *Community Life as the fundamental dimension of the missionary life. That is carried out in the community of CLM (where it is possible), be it in the apostolic community with the Comboni Missionaries or other pastoral agents; maintaining an austere style of life and an attitude of sharing with people.*
- *Continuing in their country of origin the "missionary" work being carried out especially in the promotion of the justice and the solidarity, with an "alternative lifestyle" and maintaining the CLM presence in projects 'ad extra' in the various missions.*
- *The CLM live in a coresponsible and complementary way with the other members of the Comboni Family.*

The duration

- *The missionary vocation is a life commitment.*
- *The missionary service "Ad Gentes" needs at least 2 years.*

Different types of LAY PEOPLE around the Comboni Charism

The CLM are not the only possible Comboni Lay Vocation, there are other lay, volunteers and people committed to the mission:

- ***There are volunteers*** (for life time or temporally committed), who are friends or benefactors, helping the mission without any official agreement.
- ***The associates*** (they leave for the mission for determined time).
- ***The CLM*** have a life time vocation even if their service in mission is limited. They belong to the international movement of the CLM.

CLM FORMATION

Each CLM has to go through the whole formation program before being sent in mission.

The length varies according to the local reality. Ellwangen gives guidelines but each province has to design its own program.

Formation should be determined by mission.

There is a need to reconcile formation with professional life and other commitments.

Personal knowledge

The period of pre-discernment is key for a candidate who wants to join CLM to discern

- *Family background;*
- *Human and Christian maturity;*
- *Human and Christian motivations;*
- *Social and/or ecclesial involvement;*
- *Profession (key for mission service and support);*
- *Personal expectations, hidden agendas;*
- *Sufficient education standard: each province defines requirements.*

Discernment stage

- **Duration:** *it takes about one year.*
- **Goal:** *to see how the candidate understands, accepts and lives her/his CLM call;*
- **Contents:** *each Province develops the formation program that could include Daniel Comboni; Comboni family; CLM identity; management of conflicts and feelings; engagement, marriage and family issues...*
- **Charter:** *each Province will prepare a CLM Directory or Charter which should include identity, formation and mission;*

- **Mission and community experiences:** the candidates have to experience the CLM and Mission life to know and express themselves and the community to know them better during this monitoring phase.

Formation (in depth stage)

- **Purpose:** this stage of formation aims at building a sense of belonging and personal commitment to the CLM journey.
- **Duration:** between one and two years during weekends.
- **Contents:** these three main areas: human, Christian and Comboni maturity through talks, conferences and retreats that include
 - Identity (lay + Comboni + missionary);
 - Bible, sacraments, liturgical and community prayer;
 - Social Teaching of the Church;
 - Community living and sharing;
 - Missionology and introduction to theology;
 - Human maturity: self-knowledge, personal integrity, authenticity, transparency, human and affective maturity, basic sexual issues...
 - Leadership, group dynamics, communication skills...
 - Administration.
- **Exposure:** it is important to create spaces and moments where one can manifest him/herself in a normal environment.

Specific preparation

Purpose: to prepare the candidate to take up a CLM final commitment. Previous stages should well covered!

Duration: up to six months living in a CLM community with a lifestyle as close as possible to the human environment.

Modality: Learn how to share, cook and take care of community things; community prayer; community life, programming and evaluation; personal health care...

Topics: Study culture and language if one knows where s/he goes to work; Code of Conduct (legal and social rules and consequences of misbehavior); Lectio Divina and other methods of prayer; Social Teaching of the Church; History of missions and Comboni family; community life...

Introduction to mission service

The welcoming communities organize a six-month introduction for the CLM to learn the language, culture, church and society. The newcomers should have a chance to spend some time in a local family. They should be introduced to the traditional and civil authorities.

Formation in mission: *an ongoing project to face the challenges of everyday life; it includes participation in church and social events; sharing the experiences of local partners (CLM, CMS, MCCJ...).*

COMMUNICATION, ORGANIZATION AND ECONOMY

Communication

Communication is an important tool of mission animation in line with the charism of Comboni.

- *Follow up and continuation of CLM page on www.comboni.org website (for more formal communication/sharing information).*
- *Encourage personal communication amongst CLM (for more informal communication and breaking isolation of CLM)*
- *Via exchange of email address, blogs, facebook, etc.*
- *LMC Coordinators can play a role in providing formal information and exchange of personal contacts for informal communication (with permission)*
- *Creating web links and relationships with current magazines (New People, Afriquespoir, Leadership, Worldwide, etc.)*
- *Meetings of CLM coordinators on regular basis (every three year).*
- *Assembly for CLM on regular basis*

Organization

- *Each province is welcome to reflect on their readiness to work with CLM and to concretely propose places of missionary service to be carried out by or in collaboration with MCCJ.*
 - *There is the hope that this will help with continuity of the mission.*

- *Places of missionary service should be communicated to the Central Committee to help with coordination between provinces.*
- *The Role of the Central Committee (CC)*
 - *The Central Committee should have added to their current role the duty to assist in greater communication between sending provinces and receiving provinces about places of missionary service.*
- *Each province should have a MCCJ responsible for the CLM in the province.*
- *If CLM exist, they would have their own lay coordinator.*
- *The relationship between local CLM and foreign CLM should be facilitated by the MCCJ responsible and the CLM coordinator.*

Economy\Finances

- *Work for autonomy of each CLM province*
 - *Personal commitment of each CLM to contribute according to their ability.*
 - *Each CLM should have a profession with the aim of mission service and the possibility of having income.*
 - *Develop income generating projects to sustain the group.*
 - *Focus on self-supporting projects to be carried out by CLM.*
- *Keeping firm the effort to work towards financial autonomy, there may be the need to seek support from other sources.*
 - *Collaboration between provinces*
 - *MCCJ support especially for formation*
 - *Make good use of communication tools to share about CLM projects and activities to keep contact with possible benefactors, local and foreign.*
- *Talk openly about finances at every level.*