

COVIAM

(CONFERENCE OF VISITORS IN AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR)

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I bring you greetings from the continent of Africa and Madagascar. The CM is alive and well in Africa. It was in Kinshasa in 1994 that Fr. Robert Maloney, C.M., chaired the first meeting of the body of Vincentians in Africa and this body he named COVIAM – Conference of Visitors in Africa and Madagascar. COVIAM has really grown from what it was to where it is now.

COVIAM has 10 members:

1. Congo Province
2. Ethiopia Province
3. Madagascar Province
4. SJJ Province
5. Nigeria Vice-Province
6. Mozambique Vice-Province
7. Kenya Region
8. Tanzania Region
9. Rwanda/Burundi Region
10. Cameroon Region

In 2004, at the GA in Rome, COVIAM committed herself to 9 lines of action under the following subheadings:

1. Revitalizing our vocation
2. Strengthening our apostolic work
3. Renewing our community life

1. Revitalizing Our Vocation

1. Continue the formation of formators (in Kenya)
2. Collaborate inter-provincially in terms of personnel and students
3. Study English and French (for better communication and closeness between provinces, vice-provinces and regions)

ACTIONS TAKEN:

Over the last 6 years, we have continued the program in Kenya. It is designed for a two-year program of one month each at the end of which DePaul University offers the graduates a diploma of completion. The provinces of Ethiopia and Congo and Nigeria have sent 4 confreres to the vice-province of Mozambique. We are also exchanging students in places of formation. COVIAM has decided to open a joint mission in Chad on Easter Sunday next year with confreres from Madagascar, Nigeria and Cameroon. Although we have intensified efforts at getting our students to study another language, we still have not done much in this area. But it is good to know that the consciousness is heightened now more than ever. We have just committed ourselves to learning Portuguese in addition.

2. Strengthening Our Apostolic Work

1. Make a commitment to the mission *ad gentes* in Mozambique.
2. Help in the formation of diocesan clergy.
3. Collaborate with the Vincentian Family in the struggle against poverty, especially against malaria and AIDS.

ACTIONS TAKEN:

The provinces of Ethiopia and Congo and Nigeria have sent 4 confreres to the vice-province of Mozambique. Due to the numerous vocations in Africa, the diocesan bishops have severally asked the CM to support the formation of their priests. Several confreres are full time formators in diocesan seminaries and ongoing formation of diocesan priests. The fight against poverty, malaria and AIDS is a continuous effort. Several provinces have jointly organized enlightenment campaigns against AIDS and malaria. We appreciated the workshop and meeting organized by the Systemic Change Commission in conjunction with the Delegate for the VF in Yaoundé in July 2009.

3. Renewing Our Community Life

1. Struggle against ethnic tribalism through sensitizing, human and Christian formation, equality, tolerance, balance, and respect for human dignity.
2. Struggle against insecurity and individualism through co-responsibility in the administration of goods, transparency and

solidarity having only what is essential for the mission and not accumulating things for ourselves.

3. Create a website with a bulletin to come out every two months.

ACTIONS TAKEN:

We feel these tensions in the admission of new candidates, appointments and general evaluation of confreres. We have included tribalism in our formation program. We have encouraged our students and confreres to speak freely about these issues in the community and how best to see our different tribes as wealth rather than division. The formators' program in Kenya also has this included in the curriculum. We are on course in this aspect. Our institute in Nairobi has a strong program on poverty for our formators. We are taking accountability very seriously. John Gouldrick, C.M., the economer general gave a workshop to the COVIAM members in May 2008 in Mozambique on transparency and accountability. It went down well. We are very conscious of this in our formation houses and communities. We did create a website but unfortunately we have not updated it recently. Finally, the meeting of COVIAM continues to be attractive to members. Our annual meeting is something members look forward to.

Thank you!!!